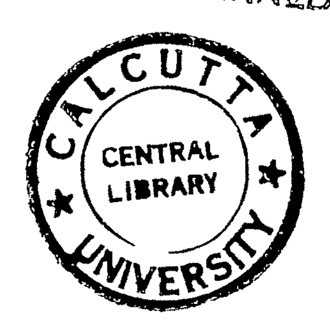
BENGAL'S RELATIONS WITH DELHI SULTANS DURING THE TURKO-AFGHAN PERIOD



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Bengal's Relations with Delhi Sultans during the Turko-Afghan Period

C O N T E N T S

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

It was in 1971-72 that the people of the then East Pakistan raised the standard of rebellion against the central authority of Islamabad and established the Republic of Bangla Desh. India was divided in 1947 on the basis of 'religion'. But within twenty-five years of the foundation of Islamic State of Pakistan, the same 'religion' failed in maintaining it's solidarity and integrity. This is not the first time that a rebellion was organised against it's central authority by the Bengalees. Since time immemorial the people of Bengal again and again tried to raise the Flag of Independence. But why ?

I decided to work on 'Bengal's Relations with Delhi Sultans during the Turko-Afghan Period' to find out the basic cause of such rebellions in Bengal. Though I have worked mainly on the Turko-Afghan period, yet I have dealt at length in the first chapter of my thesis on the circumstances, growth and development of the political aspirations of the people of ancient Bengal. In the course of my study I have come across valuable material, though often prejudiced, brief and laconic, which have helped me in reconstructing the history in its true perspective as well as in disapproving the erroneous concept of some modern scholars.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The First Chapter deals with ancient Bengal. The Second Chapter

deals with the circumstances, which led to the Muslim conquest of Bengal under Bakhtiyar Khalji and also the attitude of the Turkish lieutenants of Md. Ghori towards it. The Third Chapter deals with the rule of the Turkish rulers over Bengal through their governors appointed from Delhi and its impact on the political aspirations of Bengal. Since this period Bengal was known to the rulers of Delhi as 'Bulghakpur' and they on their side tried to transform it into an abode of submission. The Fourth Chapter narrates the relations of Bengal with the Khalji and Tughluq Sultans of Delhi. The Khaljis were not much interested in the affairs of Bengal, but the Tughluqs tried their best to subjugate it permanently, but they failed. The Fifth Chapter deals with the attitude of Saiyid and Lodi rulers of Delhi towards Bengal. In this chapter I have also tried to deal with the attitude of Babar towards Bengal after his success against Sultan Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 A.D. In the last chapter I have tried to analyse the causes which encouraged and prompted the people of Bengal to raise the Flag of Independence times and again against the outside imperialist forces.

As "the Hindus do not pay much attention to historical order of things" I have faced difficulties in discussing the First Chapter in its proper perspective.

We get material for the Turko-Afghan period from the voluminous works of the Delhi court-patronised historians like Minhaj, Barani, Amir Khusrau, Afif, Isami, and Yahya. But these historians were not at all sympathetic towards Bengal. There are only casual references to Bengal in their voluminous works, but no chronology, catalogue, or chain of events has been maintained. The Delhi chroniclers write from their master's points of view and hence they follow the principle of economy of truth. The later chroniclers like Abul Fazl, Badayuni, Nizamuddin and Firishta also have made passing references to the events of Bengal. The only systematic and achronological history of Bengal was written in the later part of the eighteenth century by Ghulam Husain Salim, which is also not free from shortcomings.

Under valuable advice and effective guidance of my revered teacher Dr. Atul Chandra Roy, M.A., Ph.D. (London), Head of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, Calcutta University, I have succeeded in overcoming the difficulties in preparing this thesis. And for this I shall remain ever grateful to him.

CHAPTER - I.

POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF BENGAL — ANCIENT PERIOD.

Vanga, the original form of native Bangla and Anglicised Bengal, occurs as the name of a people and of a janapada in north eastern India from very early times. A people identifying themselves with a region gradually developed a sense of belonging to that land. The result was the emergence of Bengal as a separate entity marked by geographical contiguity, ethnic homogeneity, cultural uniformity and community of language. The crystallisation of a people into the Bengali race and the consolidation of the region where they inhabit into a distinct geo-political unit named Bengal seem to have started when the Aitareya Aranyaka recognised Vanga as the land of the people also known as the Vangas. In this text we come across the expression : Vayamsi Vangavagadhas - Cherapada.[1] It has been suggested that the term Vangavagadha actually stood for Vanga-Magadha meaning the Vanga people and Magadhan people.[2] If this interpretation is correct then Vanga had already emerged as distinct from Magadha during the later Vedic period. In the Boudhayana Dharmasutra,[3] the Vangas

1. Aitareya Aranyaka - II. i. 1.
2. Aitareya Aranyaka, ed. A.B.Keith, pp. 101, 202.
3. I. i. 25-31.

together with the Pundras and the Kalingas have been shown as peoples altogether outside the pale of Vedic culture. A person living with them even for a temporary period was required to undergo expiatory rites. Thus culturally and ethnically the Vanga people were recognised in the Holy Writs as an entity distinct from the Vedic Aryans. No definite information, however, is given about the ethnic and cultural pattern of the Vanga people in the Vedic literature. But the present day characteristics of the Bengali people, whose nucleus these Vangas formed, consist of black hair, light and deep brown or black eye-ball, light to deep brown or dark complexion, middle size with a tendency towards short height, long hair and a nose neither flat nor high. A tendency towards round head and pointed and sharp nose is noticeable among the cast Hindus.[1]

The physical features outlined above give the Bengalis, including the Brahmins and other caste Hindus, a distinct place in Indian population. Anthropometric tests show that the Brahmanas of Bengal 'are more closely related to their non-brahmana neighbours than to the Brahmanas of Midland'.[2] It is this ethnic distinction of the Bengalis

1. Bangalir Itihasa (in Bengali), N.R.Ray, p.37.
2. Indo-Aryan Races, R.P. Chanda, p.162; H.C. Chakladar's Presidential Address, Anthropological Section vide Proceedings of the Indian Science Congress, XXIII, pp. 359ff.

that seems to constitute the background of a social and political entity in historic times. How this ethnically distinct race came into being is a subject of controversy. But the general opinion among the anthropologists is that the Bengalis "Originally came of an ethnic stock that was different from the stock from which the Vedic Aryans originated."[1] It isnot without significance that what the anthropological test shows has been indicated in the Vedic literatures. In this difference in ethnic character one may seek the reason why the Bengali people had never submitted themselves to any attempt at domination over them by the powers of the Ganga-Yamuna valley.

As has been noted above, the origin of the Bengali people's desire to maintain a separate entity from those of the Ganga-Yamuna valley lies in this consolidation as a race distinct from the Vedic Aryans. Risley[2] thinks that the comingling of Mongoloid and Dravidian stocks resulted in the creation of the Bengali race. But this theory stands on a very weak ground. In the first place, Dravida is not the name of any ethnic stock, not even the name of a tribe. It is a classificatory term for a group of languages. Among

1. R.P. Chanda, op. cit., p. 59.
2. The People of India, H.H. Risley, Delhi, 1969, pp. 40ff.

the Dravida-speaking people at least two ethnic stocks can be distinguished, viz. Negrito and Proto-Australoid. The so-called Dravidians, therefore, do not represent a homogeneous race. As regards the Mongoloid contribution to the Bengali race it should be noted that the people of the Tibeto-Chinese stock found in the North-Eastern frontiers of India are not characterised by a round-head. It is, therefore, unlikely that the round head of the Bengali people was not derived from the Mongoloid group. Moreover, the curved eye, hard hair, heavy eye-lids, scarcity of hair, flat nose and yellow colour should have been wide spread in Bengal had the Mongolian contribution to the making of her people been of any significance. Risley's theory of the Mongolo-Dravidian origin of the Bengalis, therefore, cannot be taken as a valid hypothesis.[1]

From the anthropological point of view the Bengalis appear to have been composed of the dolichocephalic and platyrrhine proto-Australoids or Kolids, dolichocephalic and broad nosed Egypto-Asians or Melanids and round-headed and leptorrhine Alpines or Eastern Bracids. The presence

1. B.S. Guha — Report on the Census of India, 1931, Vol.I, Part-III, pp. XXXIX, LXIII.

of some amount of Negrito blood may be traced in the lower stratum of the society and that too in a very restricted area. Towards northern and eastern fringes of Bengal Mongolid traits are noticeable. Nordic or pure "Indid" influence is also undeniable but that influence is very feeble.[1]

It is the blending of all these elements that created the Bengali speaking community. This blending is so deep and wide spread that it cuts across caste distinctions and does not allow any local character to grow. Anthropologically, one Bengali can not be distinguished or isolated from the other on the basis of caste or region. It is this complete blending of heterogeneous ethnic elements that created a homogeneous Bengali people and with these Bengali people the history of Bengal begins.

While the anthropological analysis establishes the existence of the Bengalis as a homogeneous race distinct from the people of the Ganga-Yamuna valley the linguistic analysis shows that the speech of these people is characterised by its own individuality. If one traces the origin and development of the Bengali language one can discover a number of words and systems which are current

1. Ray, op. cit., pp. 44.

only in Bengal and in her peripheral regions. From an examination of certain tribal names consisting of almost identical pairs of triads, differentiated between themselves only by the nature of their initial consonants, Jean Przyluski[1] draws the conclusion that the primitive peoples of Bengal and some neighbouring provinces spoke a language that was neither Aryan nor Dravidian but belonged to a separate family of speech. In the <u>Arya manjusri mulakalpa</u>, the peoples of Vanga, Samatata, Herikela, Gauda and Pundra, i.e., east, west, south and north Bengal have been described as speakers of the Asura language.[2] It is significant that one of the principal speeches of the Kol Munda group is still known as the Asura speech. Apparently, it was this Asura speech which was prevalent in Bengal. In the Eastern part of central India the Asura speaking people belong to the Proto-Australoid family. From the anthropological evidence it is known that these proto-Australoids were one of the earliest settlers of Gauda-Pundra region. The linguistic evidence points to it. The <u>Arymanjusrimulakalpa</u> makes it explicit.

1. Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India, tr. P.C. Bagchi, pp. 25ff.
2. <u>Asuranam bhavet vacha Gauda Pundrod bhava sada</u> (quoted by Ray, op. cit., p. 60).

In the Jaina Acharanga sutra[1] it is stated that when Mahavira travelled in the "Pathless country" of the Ladhas, in Vajjabhumi and Subannabhumi, many natives attacked him, and dogs ran at him. Few people kept off the attacking beasts. Striking the monk they cried chu chchhu, and let loose the dogs against him.

In Bengal chu chhu or tu tu is the common expression by which a dog is called. It is significant that the synonym for dog in the Austric language group is Chho, Chhu, Chuo etc. Obviously, Bengali Chu Chhu, tu tu are drawn from some such Austric word for dog. It may hence be inferred that during the 6th century B.C. when Mahavira was preaching his religion, some language belonging to the Austric speech family was current in Radha-Suhma. Still now this area is extensively inhabited by Santals and Kols whose language belong to the Austric order.

Some unmistakably Dravidian affinities in Bengali phonetics, morphology, syntax and vocabulary show that in the formation of the Bengali language the Dravidian contribution was quite significant. On the other hand, the influence of the Tibeto-Chinese speech on the Bengali language is negligible. As the Mongoloid blood in the veins of the Bengali people is almost absent so also the

1. Acharanga Sutra - I. 8. 3.

presence of the Tibeto-Chinese language in the Bengali speech is not very much perceptible.

The infiltration of various speeches, which began centuries before the birth of Christ, must have made the linguistic situation in Bengal very complex. But we have no definite or positive information about the early development of the language. The picture, however, began to take a definite shape when the Aryan speech started overflowing into Bengal. G. Grierson[1] has shown that the language of the people of Gujarat, Maharashtra, central India, Orissa and particularly Bihar, Bengal and Assam is dominated by the Aryan speech but the core of this language is different from the Hindi, Rajasthani and other Indo-Aryan languages of the north. (languages which are spoken in the Sindhu-Ganga divide and derived from the Vedic Aryan speech) It seems that the non-Vedic Aryan speakers of Bengal and other places mentioned by Grierson as Outer Aryans belonged to the Aryan-speaking Alpo-Dravidian group. Finally, the Vedic Aryan speech overflowed into Bengali, first into speech of people living in the West and North Bengal, and then into Central and East Bengal. Thereafter a process of assimilation started in which all the speeches which had come previously to Bengal had been assimilated into the common Bengali Indo-Aryan speech. When this process was complete,

1. The Indian Empire, Vol.I, pp. 357ff.

Bengali language received its shape as distinct from other languages of India. Summing up the process of formation of the Bengali language S.K. Chatterjee[1] says that it would appear that the non-Aryan speaking tribes of Bengal began to receive among them Aryan-speaking elements from Magadha and upper India from the closing centuries of the 1st millennium B.C. and gradually became Aryanised in speech by the middle of the 1st millennium A.D. The foundation of the Pala empire almost went hand in hand with the formation of a Proto-Bengali speech out of the Magadhi Prakrit and Magadhi Apabhramsa dialects which had come to Bengal. The final wedding of the Magadhi Prakrit and Apabhramsa dialects current in Bengal into a uniform Proto-Bengali type, gave the basis of a national language to the province and thus provided a strong bond of union among its various and diverse peoples.

The crystallisation of the Bengalis as a race and the development of Bengali as a language went hand in hand with the realisation of Bengal as a geographical entity. As has been noted above, Vanga from which Bengal derives its name is mentioned as an Eastern country in the Holy Writ.

1. History of Bengal, Vol. I.
   ed. R.C. Majumder, p. 392.

In the Mahabharata,[1] Vanga occurs as a neighbouring janapada of Pundra, Tamralipta and Suhma. The latter three janapadas are known to have been ancient names of three regions of present day Bengal (undivided). Vanga, therefore, originally comprised a part of Bengal and not the whole province. This country evidently lay to the west of the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) since the Pandava hero Bhima conquered Vanga and reached the banks of the Lauhitya. Yasodhara[2] in his commentary on Vatsyayana's Kamasutra also writes Vanga Lauhityat Purvena. Kalidasa[3] says that Raghu after defeating the Vangas crossed the Kapisa and then reached Utkal. This statement suggests that Tamralipta, which has been regarded as outside Vanga in the Mahabharata, was included within Vanga during the Gupta period. In the Jaina Prajna pana[4] Tamralipti has been described as a city of Vanga.

Like Vanga, Pundra was another important janapada of Bengal. The Digvijaya Section of the Mahabharata[5] places

1. Mahabharata, Sabhaparvan, 30.
2. Kamasutra, Chowkhamba (Benares) Sanskrit Series, p. 295.
3. Raghuvamsa, IV. 36.
4. Indian Antiquary, 1891, p. 375.
5. Sabhaparvan, 30.

the Pundras to the East of Monghyr. The evidence of the Gupta inscriptions[1] and the Chinese accounts indicate the location of Pundravardhana in North Bengal. This is also apparent from the fact that Varendri, the metropolitan district of Pundravardhana territory, included the Bogra, Rajsahi and Dinajpur districts of pre-partition Bengal. Radha was another janapada of Bengal. It seems to have comprised the Howrah, Hooghly, Burdwan, Birbhum and Murshidabad districts in West Bengal. The Acharanga-sutra[2] divides the land of Ladha (Radha) into two parts namely Vijjabhumi and Subba (Suhma) -bhumi. Vijjabhumi or Vajrabhumi, "Land of Diamond" reminds one of the Mughal administrative divisions known as Sarkar of Mandaran in South-West Bengal mentioned in the Ain-i-Akbari in which there was a diamond mine. This Sarkar included parts of Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly district, Suhmabhumi had the Tribeni-Saptagrama Pandua area in the Hooghly district as its heart. In the Allahabad Pillar inscription[3] of Samudragupta reference is made to the country of Samatata which corresponded to South-east Bengal.

1. Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilisation, D.C. Sircar, pp. 291, 293, 333 and 347.
2. Sacred Books of the East, Vol.XXII, 84. 264.
3. Sircar, op. cit., p. 295 and fn.

The division of ancient Bengal into a number of Janapadas was natural since the janapadas were originally settlements of tribes belonging to different ethnic stocks. The gradual process of comingling of these tribes resulted in the overlapping of the boundaries of the janapadas in which they settled. The names of these ancient settlements often transformed into administrative units and the whole region developed tendency to be designated by a single name. The latter tendency was the consequence of the gradual crystallisation of the tribes into a single race which wanted to be identified in relation to a geographical area. Thus Pundravardhana, which originally came into being as a tribal settlement in North Bengal, later received a wider denotation to include the region from the summit base of the Himalayas in the North to the Sundarban region in the south. The Madhyapada plates of Visvarupasena extends the eastern boundary of Pundravardhana[1] to the sea, apparently the Bay of Bengal and the estuary of the Meghna. Vanga and Samatata became parts of this Pundravardhana. The geographical contiguity which Bengal offers was thus largely realised by almost identifying Pundravardhana with this province. But Pundravardhana was not destined to give its name to this province.

1. Inscriptions of Bengal, N.G.Majumdar, pp. 140ff.

As a matter of fact, even in its widest extent Pundravardhana did not include Burdwan, Bankura and Midnapore districts. The contiguity of the latter places with the rest of Bengal, however, did not allow them to maintain their isolated existence. Indeed a kingdom of one of these areas tried to realise the geographical unity of Bengal by expanding itself towards the natural boundaries of this province. Though politically this endeavour was only partially realised, geographically it could bind almost all the regions of Bengal under one common name. This kingdom was Gauda which came to prominence after the fall of the Gupta empire. In the Brihatsamhita[1] of Varaha-mihira, Gaudaka occurs as a part of Bengal being distinct from Pundra (North Bengal), Tamraliptika (part of the Midnapore district), Vanga and Samatata (central and eastern Bengal) and Vardhamana (Burdwan district). The Bhavishya Purana places Gaudadesa in the land between the river Padma and Vardhamana. Thus the Gauda country is placed exactly about the Murshidabad district bounded in the North by the Padma and in the South by the Burdwan or Vardhamana district. It is in this area where the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang[2] saw the capital city

1. Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, D.C. Sircar, p.121.
2. On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, T. Watters, Vol.II, pp. 191f.

of the Gauda kingdom. We learn from his writings that the name of this capital city was Karnasuvarna. Recent excavations have shown that it corresponds to the present day Rangamati, some twelve miles to the south of Murshidabad.[1]

At the time the kingdom of Gauda definitely included Northern and Western Bengal. Sasanka, the king of Gauda, who died shortly before the visit of the Chinese pilgrim to Eastern India is known to have extended the geographical horizon of Gauda by the occupation of Pundravardhana in the North and by advancing as far as Benares in the West and Ganjam in the South-West. In the North-east, his kingdom apparently touched the border of the kingdom of Kamarupa.[2] Thus the whole of Bengal excepting its Southern and Eastern parts was politically united under the name of Gauda. This fact appears to have been recognised by the Trikandadesa which ignores the separate existence of Pundra and Varendra and makes them part of Gauda.[3] The application

1. Rajbadidanga, S.R. Das, passim.
2. History of Bengal, Vol. I, ed. R.C. Majumder, pp. 59ff.
3. Pundrah Syur = Varendri Gauda - nivriti (Sircar, op. cit., p. 122).

of the name of Gauda to a wide geographical area is also suggested by Dandin who draws a distinction between the Gaudas or Eastern and the Vidarbha or Southern styles in literary construction.[1] The identification of a literary style with the geographical region around Gauda shows that the importance of Gauda had become already established in the social and cultural life of India. It is, therefore, no wonder that when the Palas came to power in Bengal during the latter half of the eighth century A.D. they preferred to describe themselves as Gaudesvara. This epithet gave expression to the realisation that Bengal is a geographical personality. Thus Bengal was no longer an agglomeration of disjointed units but had grown to be a well defined geographical area in the body of which all the former janapadas had lost their individual identity. The existence of Bengal as a geographical fact was so much established that the Palas ruling simultaneously over Bengal and Bihar never took these two regions as a single geographical unit. On the other hand, they always distinguished them as two separate provinces of the same empire.

While the Pala kings used the epithet Gaudesvara to emphasise their suzerainty over Bengal, they were sometimes

1. A History of Literature, A.B. Keith, p. 60.

described as lord of Vanga or Vangala. The Nesari plates[1] of Rashtrakuta king Govinda III speaks of Dharmapala as the king of Vangala. In the Sagartal inscription[2] of Bhoja, he is called "Lord of Vanga". The same king is again mentioned in the Sanjan plates[3] of Amoghavarsha as the "King of Gauda". Thus under the Palas Vanga and Gauda became interchangeable terms. The synonymity of Gauda and Vanga marked the completion of the process of integration of a geographically contiguous region. The two halves into which the Bengali speaking area was divided, viz. Eastern Bengal called Vanga and Western Bengal called Gauda, merged into one and consequently the names Gauda and Vanga received a wider denotation to include the whole and not merely a part of Bengal. The Muslim writers also testify to the identity of Gauda-Vanga when they describe Bengal as Gaur-Bangala or Gaur-wa-Bangla.[4] But it was Vanga and not Gauda which ultimately gave its name to the area now

1. Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters, Vol. XXII, 1956, pp. 133 f.
2. Sircar, op. cit., p. 132.
3. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XVIII, p. 253.
4. Vide Numismatic Supplement, No. XXXIV, referring to the Humayun Nama of Gulbadan Begum.

known as Bengal. In the Sakti-Sangamatantra,[1] Vanga extends from the Brahmaputra to the Bay of Bengal. The gradual widening of the denotation of Vanga made it overlap Gauda during the Pala period. For some time thereafter Vanga and Gauda became two interchangeable names to refer to the same region. Finally, Bangla, a derivative of Vangala, received general acceptance as the name of this province. Thus at the time of Ferishta, Gauda though vaguely meant Bengal was referred more precisely to the capital city of the country named Bangala.[2]

The acceptance of a common name for the entire Bengali speaking area marked the completion of a process of nation building which started with the fusion of various ethnic elements into the Bengali race, their developing a common language from non-Aryan and Aryan speeches and their endeavour at identifying themselves with a specified area. This march towards nationhood was challenged from time to time by such Indian rulers whose imperial ambition demanded the destruction of any trend towards regionalism. Bengal, therefore suffered from a succession of raids aiming at her

1. Sakti Saugama tantra : II. 7. 3.
2. Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Nawal Kishore Press ed., Vol.I, p. 21, Vol. II, p. 293.

subjection to the imperial rule of the upper and middle Gangetic valley. But none of these invaders was able to destroy the national aspiration of Bengal. No empire was successful in wiping out the geographical personality of Bengal and no emperor achieved any degree of success in dissolving the Bengali people in the vast mass of his subjects. Though not yet crystallised into a race the distinctive character of the Bengali people found expression through their desire to maintain separate existence from the people of the Ganga-Yamuna valley from very early times. It was this desire which inspired them to fight against attempts at domination over them by powers from outside. The history of Bengal, therefore, is the history of conflict of two opposing forces one coming from upper India to dominate the Ganga Brahmaputra valley and the other determined to keep this region free from such domination. Occasionally, dynasties from outside came to rule this region. But severed from their land of origin each of these ruling houses started identifying itself with its land of adoption. Once this identification was complete, it strove for giving shape to the national aspiration of Bengal. A perusal of the political history of Bengal will bear out this fact.

Except occasional glimpses found in the Vedic literature nothing definite is known about the early history

of Bengal. These casual notices again reveal an attitude toward Bengal which is not one of approbation. This attitude apparently generated from a sense of difference in culture and ethnic origin between the Bengali people and the writers of the Vedic texts. Soon these two peoples, one trying to spread the Vedic culture and the other determined to maintain their individuality, met each other in a hostile confrontation. The invaders from the people of Gangetic valley representing Vedic culture who tried to make persistant efforts at Aryanising Bengal. Time and again petty tribal kings of Bengal submitted to these invaders but in submitting to them they followed a come-like course as against a river torrent. The moment the current of invasion passed away, they, like canes in a river again raised their heads in revolt. We learn from the Mahabharata that Paundraka-Vasudeva, lord of the Paundras, united Vanga, Pundra and Kirata into a powerful confederacy but was ultimately crushed by Vasudeva-Krishna. Paundraka-Vasudeva may thus be regarded as the first national hero of Bengal who made an unsuccessful bid towards the unification of Bengal for resisting conquerors from upper India. The failure of Paundraka-Vasudeva had made the people of Bengal defenceless against the Pandava invasion led by Bhima. The Vangas and the Pundras were

forced to pay tribute to Yudhisthira.[1] This they did only for biding their time. The Kuru-Pandava war provided them with an opportunity to rise in revolt against the Pandavas. They not only grabbed this opportunity but also joined the Kurus as allies. Carrying their distinctive 'dhvajas' or battle standards the Bengal kings fought heroically against the Pandavas.

Nothing is definitely known about the history of Bengal following the Bharata War. But when Alexander invaded India in the latter half of the 4th century B.C. a considerable portion of this country constituted the domain of a powerful nation which extended its sway over the whole of ancient Vanga and possibly some adjoining tracts. Known to the classical writers as the dominions of the Gangaridai (land of the people of the Gangetic region), it was considered as a region distinct from the dominion of the Prasioi which referred to the Magadhan empire proper.[2] The evidence of the classical writers suggests that the country of the Gangaridai was already a part of the Magadhan empire but at the same time it was not integrated with the rest of this empire. This fact encourages Curtius[3] to refer to the

1. Mahabharata, Sabha., XXIX.
2. Diodorus, XVII. 93.
3. The Early History of Bengal, F.J. Monahan, p. 2.

Gangaridai and the Prasioi as two nations under one king Agrammes. On the other hand Plutarch[1] speaks of the kings of the Gangaridai and Prasioi. This statement if correct would suggest that the Gangaridai either formed a dual monarchy with the Prasioi or were otherwise closely associated with each other on equal terms.

The accounts of the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea[2] and Ptolemy[3] seem to indicate that in the first two centuries of the Christian era the whole of deltaic Bengal was organised into a powerful kingdom with its capital at Gange, a great market-town on the banks or somewhere in the lower valley of Ganga. The Periplus states that pearls, muslins of finest sorts and other commodities were shipped from this port to south India and Ceylon. The fortified city unearthed at Chandraketugarh in the district of 24-Parganas probably may represent Gange of the Periplus and Ptolemy. Another port-town, and trading centre was Tamralipta. As recorded in the Kathasaritsagara,[4] Tamralipta was pre-eminently the city of rich merchants,

1. Ibid., pp. 2f.
2. Ed. W.H. Schoff, Sec. 63.
3. McCrindle's Ancient India as described by Ptolemy, ed. S.N. Majumdar-Sastri, p. 172f.
4. Tawney's trans., V.I, 211; III. 175.

who carried on overseas trade with such distant countries as Lanka and Suvarnadvipa. Merchantmen from upper India taking their ship at Benares or Champa had to pass through this port of Bengal en route to Ceylon or Suvarnabhumi. It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that in all periods of North Indian history, the city which controlled the mouth of the Ganga was commercially the most important, just as the city which controlled the gates of Euxine was commercially the most important in Hellas. Down almost to the end of the Pala period, Tamralipta enjoyed this unique position. From this port there was regular sailing of vessels which either proceeded along the coast of Bengal and Burma or crossed the Bay of Bengal and made a direct voyage to Malaya peninsula and then to the East Indies and Indo-China and China beyond it or to Ceylon from where they proceeded to the East Indies or along the Western coast of India upto Barygaza and perhaps even beyond it.[1] Further, it was connected by land routes with the principal cities of Bengal and other ports of Eastern India. I-tsing,[2] who landed at

1. The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. R.C. Majumdar, pp. 653f.
2. Record of Buddhistic Religion as practised in India and Malay Archipelago, ed. J.A. Takakusu, p. XXXI.

Tamralipta in 673 A.D., says that when he left the sea-port "taking the road which goes straight to West" many hundreds of merchants accompanied him in his journey to Bodh-Gaya. An eighth century inscription[1] of a chief named Udayamana reveals that merchants from such distant places as Ayodhya used to frequent the port of Tamralipta for purposes of trade. Because of this happy geographical position as the meeting place of land and water communications, it became the emporium of vast trans-occanic trade of eastern and central provinces of India. Fa-hien[2] mentions Tamralipta as a great emporium of trade and he himself embarked for Ceylon on a big merchant vessal from this port. Hiuen Tsang[3] notes that "wonderful articles of value and gems collected here in general are very rich."

The ports of Bengal by virtue of their location were in a position to control the international trade between North India and South-East Asia. Political hold over the lower Gangetic valley therefore, was necessary for those powers of the upper gangetic region whose economic prosperity depended much on this trade. Again it was the same economic consideration which demanded administrative

1. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.II, p. 345.
2. Travels of Fa-hsien, H.A. Giles, p.66.
3. Records, S. Beal, Vol. II, pp. 200f.

authority over North Bengal by powers of the upper and middle Gangetic valley. An overland trade-route running between Yunnan and Szechwan and Afghanistan via Pundravardhana gave North Bengal an important place in the commercial map of India. The evidence of Chang-Kien[1] suggests that long before the birth of Christ this route was used for transporting silk from Southern China to Afghanistan. In ancient world the great powers were very much aware about the commercial importance of the silk routes. Thus the Chinese rulers were always anxious to keep central Asia under their control for maintaining an uninterrupted traffic in silk between east and west. The Iranians and the Kushanas also fought for the control of the silk-route and the Romans were interested in keeping the eastern trade routes safe.[2] Equally, the powers of the upper and middle Gangetic valley did not want that a part of such a silk route should remain out of their control. There was still another silk-route running through Bengal. It appears from the account of the Periplus[3] that raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth were used to be carried from China to Bengal through Tibet,

1. History of Bengal, ed. R.C. Majumder, Vol.I, p. 662.
2. Iran, B. Ghisshman, p. 260.
3. Schoff, op. cit., notes on section 63 of the Periplus.

Chumbi valley and Sikkim. From Bengal this stuff was again re-exported to Damirica by way of the river Ganga. The disruption in Central Asian silk route owing to political disturbances became vital to commercial interest of the nations engaged in silk trade.

Besides the strategic position, which enabled her to control North India's trade with East and South-east Asia, Bengal was famous for a number of products of high commercial value. From very early times this land acquired great reputation in textile manufacture. Kautilya[1] testifies to the great eminence of Bengal as a seat of textile manufacture. He mentions four varities of textile commodities which were produced in Bengal in his time, viz. kshauma, dukula, patrona, and karpasaka. The Chief centre of the manufacture of Kshauma was Pundravardhana; one variety of dukula (varigaka) was produced in lower Bengal and the other (paundraka) in the North Bengal. Patrona was produced in Pundra. Vanga together with six other regions in India produced the best variety of Karpasaka. Speaking of a variety of Bengal textile, Kautilya[2] says that it is as smooth as the surface of gem." The superior quality of

1. Arthasastra, II. 11. 102-115.
2. Ibid., II. 11. 102.

this textile created a demand for it in foreign markets. The Periplus[1] refers to the export of "muslin of finest sort", called Gangetic, from Bengal to the West. Ventus textilis, or nebula, were names under which the Romans knew of them.[2] It was most delicate of all the fabrics of India, an ancient test of which was for the piece to be drawn through a finger-ring. In the 9th century, Sulaiman[3] says that the cotton textile of Ruhmi (i.e. Bengal) "is so fine and delicate that a dress made of it may be passed through a signet ring." At several places in north-western India muslins were produced, but nowhere of quality equal to those of Bengal. Besides the exports of muslin from the ports of Bengal, this stuff was also brought overland to west India for its shipmentto the Roman world. Thus in the Periplus it appears as an item of export at the mouth of the Indus and at the Gulf of Cambay.[4]

In addition to textile industry, Bengal was very rich in her natural resources. The Periplus[5] refers to the

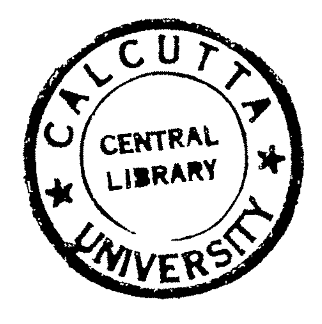
1. Sec. 63.
2. Schoff, op. cit., notes on section 63 of the Periplus.
3. The History of India as told by its own Historians, ed. H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, Vol.I, p. 351.
4. Schoff, op. cit., Sec. 39 and 4.
5. Sec. 63.

gold mines in the neighbourhood of Gange. These mines were probably located in the Chotanagpur belt in West Bengal. The rivers flowing north and east of this plateau have long produced alluvial gold in considerable quantities.[1] Having a local source of this precious metals the rulers of Bengal could introduce a gold coin which Periplus describes as Caltis.[2] In the Himalayan region was grown spikenard of high export value.[3] Pliny[4] observes that leaf nard, or spikenard, held the first place in Rome among the ointments of his day. In Mark. XIV, 3-5 we read that an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard was valued at more than 300 denarii. The Periplus[5] refers to the export of the "Gangetic spikenard" through the port of Gange. It was also brought overland to Nelcynda (near Kottayam) and then shipped westward. Malabathrum was another product of Bengal which had a demand in the West.[6] Pearls of the Gangetic streams was another item of export through Gange.

1. Ancient India as described in Classical literature, R.C. Majumder, p.43.
2. Sec. 63.
3. Commercial Productsof India, G. Watt, p. 792.
4. Natural History, Pliny, XII, 26.
5. Sec. 63.
6. Sec. 56.

The commanding position of Bengal over the silk-route and other overland and overseas routes linking northern India with east and south east Asia[1] made her virtually the controlling authority of the economic activities in upper India. This fact together with her own role as manufacturer, producer and exporter of highly valued commercial products enhanced the economic importance of Bengal. The domination over the source of these products, keeping of the trade-routes without obstruction and controlling of the Gangetic ports were necessary for any ruler in the upper and middle Gangetic valley if he did not want to depend on the ruling powers of Bengal for the prosperity of his state through trade and commerce. It was this economic consideration which inspired imperial powers of north India to make Bengal an integral part of their respective empires. This trend was very much in evidence from the beginning of the age of imperialism in India. The Nandas of Magadha while building a mighty empire in North India kept the Gangetic Bengal in sub-servient or on friendly terms. It is not clear whether the Nandas annexed this region or allowed it to continue as an autonomous state. In either event there is no evidence to show that Magadhan traders found any difficulty in conducting their trade through Bengal. The Mauryas, who succeeded the Nandas in Magadha, brought about a centralised

1. Ibc. 22.



administration with state having full control over trade and commerce. This new policy demanded direct control over the production centres of commercial goods, trade-routes and port-towns in Bengal. Mauryan conquest of Bengal was, therefore, inevitable. Under the Mauryas, Tamralipta became a very important trading port from where ships made regular overseas voyages. Asoka is known to have come to Tamralipta to see his son and daughter sail for Ceylon.[1] But the Mauryan rule over Bengal failed to destroy its individuality and merge it permanently with Magadha. The fall of this dynasty was followed by the rise of a numbers of independent states in Bengal. There is no definite evidence to show that the Sungas and Kanvas who came to occupy the throne of Magadha in succession after the Mauryas ever ruled over any part of Bengal. It is also uncertain whether the Kushanas extended their authority over Bengal. When the Guptas rose to imperial position in North India sometime after the fall of the Kushanas, the independent existence of Bengal was again thereatened. It may or may not be a fact that the Guptas were originally a local people or western or northern Bengal.[2] But the early rulers of this dynasty at first

1. Mahavamsa - ed. W. Geiger, pp. XXXVIII, 101 - 1.
2. Early History of Northern India, S. Chattopadhyaya, 1958, pp. 136 ff.

tried to consolidate their position in the upper and middle Gangetic basin instead of expanding their kingdom towards the East. When that was accomplished the South-eastern part of the Ganga basin became the natural area of expansion for the Gupta empire. Apart from that the empire required an access to the sea. Till then the Guptas were a land-locked power. They could not afford to remain so for long. A great deal of the prosperity of their empire depended on foreign trade. This meant that the very basis of the country's economic stability depended on powers holding these ports. Sakas held the important ports in Western India. The Guptas were not yet prepared to measure their sword with this foreign dynasty of Gujarat and Malwa. The economic necessities of the empire, therefore, demanded an expansion towards the east where no formidable power was present. The Allahabad Pillar inscription[1] describes how Samudragupta crushed the power of Nagadatta, probably the ruler of Pundravardhana,[2] and Chandravarman taken to be a king of West Bengal,[3] and forced the ruler of Samatata

1. Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilisation, D.C. Sircar, p. 265.
2. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1945, pp. 78-81.
3. Sircar, op. cit., p. 265, f.n. 2.

(South-east Bengal) to pay tribute. If one remembers that the contemporary Chinese rulers had been trying to keep central Asia under their control for the sake of trade with the Western world, the Iranians and the Kushanas had been fighting for the control of the silk-route and the Romans were interested in keeping the Eastern trade-route safe one can discover a meaning in Samudragupta's Eastern campaign. His victory over Nagadatta gave him control over the silk-route running between China and the West. On the other hand, the defeat of Chandravarman gave the Gupta monarch a command over the lower Gangetic region. Tamralipta, which was the main port in this region, was not only a window to the east but also the outlet of one of the silk-routes running through Bengal.

The victory of Samudragupta did not result in the dissolution of Bengal's geographical integrity or the process of consolidation of the Bengali people as a race. To assert this fact however the Vanga people formed a confederacy against Chandra,[1] who has generally been identified with Chandragupta-II, the son and successor of Samudragupta. The formation of a confederacy by the Bengali people against the Gupta monarch in itself was a

1. Sircar, op. cit., p. 283.

significant event. It shows that while the Vanga people felt a kinship among themselves they considered Magadhan rule as alien domination. However, the combined resistance of the Vangas could not withstand Chandra's onslaught. In consequence, Gupta rule was established over Bengal and local governors owing allegiance to this imperial house, started functioning in different parts of this region. Sometimes members of the royal family were appointed as governors. One such governor was Vainyagupta who had the charge of East Bengal.[1] This administrator felt his identity more with the region over which he was ruling than with distant Magadha. He, therefore, sought for the independence of Bengal. From his base in East Bengal he advanced upon the West and freed Southern and Western Bengal from Magadhan domination. A seal discovered at Nalanda[2] gives Vainyagupta the full imperial title of Maharajadhiraja and proves that he extended his authority at least temporarily over South Bihar. Vijayasena, who was the Dutaka (executor) of his Gunaighar copper plate, seems to have been appointed governors of the Western region of Vainyagupta's kingdom. Not long afterwards, Eastern and Southern Bengal constituted

1. Sircar - op. cit., pp. 140ff.
2. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 66, p. 67.

an independent kingdom under Gopachandra and his successors.[1] The whole of North Bengal and Northern part of West Bengal, however, remained outside the kingdom of Gopachandra. "From about this period these territories came to be known as the kingdom of Gauda, through this geographical term sometimes comprised the whole of Western Bengal. Henceforth throughout the Hindu period, Gauda and Vanga loosely denoted the two prominent political divisions of Bengal, the former comprising the Northern and either the whole or part of Western Bengal, and the latter, Southern and Eastern Bengal."[2] At the beginning of the 7th century A.D. Gauda is found to have formed an independent kingdom under Sasanka. In his attempt at the unification of Bengal, he could establish himself firmly over northern and western Bengal. His capital was at Karnasuvarna, modern Rangamati in the Murshidabad district. With the rise of Sasanka had started the imperial career of Bengal which so far remained a local power. Such a turn of events was bound to come. It is a fact that most of the various geographical regions of India are small and, consequently, the states which used to emerge as their political manifestations, were usually very small and weak. Only a few of them could become the territorial bases of large

1. Sircar - op. cit., pp. 363 ff.
2. History of Bengal, Vol.I, ed. R.C. Majumder, p. 55.

empires. The most important of such exceptional areas is the vast Ganga basin including the Deltaic region of Bengal, "the core of India from every point of view."[1] It has been the basis of the entire succession of North Indian empires; and has been a factor of considerable importance in determining their career and course of expansion. For example, the empire builders whose source of strength lay in the north-west and who entered the Ganga basin Via Indo-Gangetic Divide tried to expand themselves towards the eastern provinces while those who originated or started their career in the east tried to expand towards the west. The rise of the Haryanka, Sisunaga, Nanda, Maurya, Sunga, Kanva dynasties one after another and some time later of the Guptas in the middle Gangetic basin did not encourage any Westward Expansion from Bengal till the end of the 6th century A.D. But the disintegration of the Gupta empire created a power vacuum in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. Bengal now found an opportunity to enter into a trial of strength with other powers for empire-building in North India. The ground was already prepared for this task by Sasanka. As Majumdar[2] remarks, "it stands to reason that he brought the whole of Bengal under his sway"

1. Geographical Factors in Indian History, K.M. Panikkar, p. 25.
2. The Classical Age, ed. R.C. Majumder, p. 79.

before giving shape to his imperial design. If this surmise is nearer the truth then Sasanka was the first national king of Bengal. It was he who gave for the first time a political definition to this geographically contiguous region and bring her ethnically and culturally akin people together under one standard. The political unification of Bengal enabled Sasanka to master under him a formidable army which so far remained scattered in piecemeal groups. With this army Sasanka extended the kingdom of Gauda upto Benares[1] in the west and Mahendragiri[2] in the South-west. His imperial design soon involved him in a struggle with the Maukhari-Pushyabhuti axis in the Indo-Gangetic Divide. Sasanka was successful in storming Kanauj, the Maukhari capital. The Pushyabhuti king Rajyavardhana[3] was also murdered in this encounter. Harshavardhana, who succeeded Rajyavardhana to the Pushyabhuti throne, advanced with a huge army to wreck vengeance on Sasanka.[4] But epigraphical

1. Vide Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters, Vol.XI, 1945, p. 1f.
2. The Classical Age, ed. R.C. Majumdar, p. 94.
3. History of Bengal, Vol.I, ed. R. C. Majumdar, pp. 61f.
4. Harshacharita, tr. E.B. Cowell and F.W. Thomas, p. 187.

evidence[1] and the testimony of Hiuen Tsang[2] suggest that Sasanka was able to maintain his full imperial glory till his death. By making a bold bid for expanding Gauda into a North Indian empire Sasanka laid the foundation of that policy which was pursued by the Palas.

The empire built by Sasanka did not survive his death. Harshavardhana and the king of Kamarupa formed a powerful combination against the growing menace of Gauda. Soon after the death of Sasanka, they marched towards Bengal and while the Kamarupa king Bhaskaravarman conquered North and West Bengal Harsha annexed that portion of Sasanka's empire which lay outside the geographical boundary of Bengal.[3]

For more than a century after this event the history of Gauda is obscure. But at the same time there is evidence to suggest that not long after the death of Bhaskaravarman, Kamarupa's hold over Bengal ceased to exist. At the beginning of the 8th century Bengal again became a power to be reckoned with. This explains why Yasovarman, the king of Kanauj, regarded the Lord of Gauda as one of his chief

1. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.VI, pp. 143ff.
2. Watters - op.cit., Vol. II, p. 115.
3. Life of Hiuen Tsang, trans. S. Beal, pp. 159, 172.
Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XII, p. 65.

adversaries during his '*digvijaya*' campaign. His success against Gauda was considered a great achievement and his court-poet Vakpatiraja thought it fit to entitle his book as *Gaudavaho* (Salaying of the king of Gauda). Following the footsteps of Yasovarman came Lalitaditya, the king of Kashmir. Kalhana[1] says that Lalitaditya murdered the Gauda king after securing his confidence by giving false assurance.

The series of foreign invasions created a state of political disintegration, anarchy and confusion in Bengal. Describing this situation the Tibetan Lama Taranatha[2] writes that there was no ruling king over either Gauda or Vanga and every Kshatriya, Grandee, Brahmana and merchant was a king in his own house. Thus the political fabric reared up with so much care by Vainyagupta, Gopachandra and Sasanka was shattered into pieces. According to the Khalimpur plate of Dharmapala[3] Bengal was under a state of *matsyanyaya*, explained as a state of complete anarchy due to the absence of a recognised ruling authority, where every local chief assumes royal authority under the principle 'might alone is right'.

1. *Rajatarangini*, IV. 323-30.
2. Vide Indian Antiquary, Vol.IV, pp. 365f.
3. Vide, Epigraphia Indica, Vol.IV, p. 243.

The need of the time was an assertion of national consciousness the signs of which were being increasingly manifested in the past. By the middle of the eighth century this consciousness aroused the people of Bengal to a sense of oneness. It was this awareness which inspired them to meet the challenge of disintegration in a way unexpected in the then political set up. The Khalimpur copper plate[1] records that the people of Bengal in order to put an end to a lawless state of things made Gopala their king. It was a momentous event in the history of Bengal. As Majumdar[2] writes "The ideal of subordinating individual interests to a national cause was not as common in India in the eighth century A.D. as it was in Europe a thousand years later." With the accession of Gopala started the Pala period in the history of Bengal. During this period the Palas fulfilled the aspiration of the people to achieve a political entity and this was finally fulfilled. Elected to the leadership of Bengal, the Palas made the Bengalis united under their banner and prepared them for realising the dream of nationhood. Long before the Palas, Paundraka Vasudeva strove for uniting the states of Bengal in a confederacy. Vainyagupta could forge a political unit between east and west Bengal.

1. Ibid.
2. History of Bengal, Vol.I, ed. R.C. Majumdar, pp. 96f.

Sasanka was lord of North and West and also probably of East Bengal. But the political unity effected by these kings were of a temporary nature and the struggle of the Bengali people towards nationhood never found permanent expression before the rise of the Palas. Under the Palas, Gauda and Vanga representing North, South, East and West Bengal became one single geographical entity. Hence the Pala kings were Gaudendravangapati[1] meaning the lord of both Gauda and Vanga. Likewise the people of this region received a common name. Thus when Pratihara king Bhoja I met the army of the Palas he did not face a mercenary force but a people called Vangas under the command of their national hero the Vangapati.[2]

With the period of consolidation having been over, the period of assertion began. With Dharmapala, and thereafter Devapala at the helm of affairs Bengal launched herself into a career of imperial glory and military renown to which there has been no parallel before or since. This imperial policy made Bengal politically the most powerful state in India at least for some time. In the Monghyr grant,[3] Devapala

1. Vide, Epigraphia Indica, Vol.VI, p.242.
2. The Sagartal Inscription, Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XVIII, p. 113.
3. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XVIII, pp. 304ff.

is stated to have extended his empire from the Himalaya to Rameswaram and the Bay of Bengal to Arabian Sea. This statement may appear somewhat exaggerated but it remains a fact that Bengal exerted a strong influence over North India during this period. That this influence transcended the political sphere has been manifested by occasional references to Aryavarta, i.e. the whole of North India as Gauda.[1]

The imperial glory of Bengal did not last long. Decline of the Pala power started immediately after the death of Devapala. External powers like the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Kalachuris and Chedis seized the opportunity to harass the weak successors of Devapala. But by now the reality of Bengal was firmly established and as such these invasions from outside did no longer pose any threat to the individual entity of Bengal. As a result, though occupation of parts of Bengal by powers from outside that would take place from time to time after the death of Devapala, such happenings could not cause disintegration of this region into small states. The Bengali people also could not accept these outsiders as their own. Only when the Senas came to Bengal and made it their home than the Bengali people reconciled themselves with the rule of the dynasty of South Indian origin.

1. Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, D.C. Sircar, pp. 128ff.

By virtue of their complete identification with Bengal the Senas became in effect more Bengali than the Bengalis themselves. Before the Senas, the Palas had given expression to the basic geographical unity of Bengal. Senas now entrusted themselves with the task of giving her people a social organisation which should conform to the local needs. Traditions in Bengal affirm that the Sena king Vallalasena introduced important reforms which formed the foundation of the present day Bengali society.[1] In the sphere of language and literature also, Bengal acquired a regional character. It has been noticed before that Gaudimarga or Gaudiriti was already a literary diction during the time of Bhamaha and Dandin. The reference to Gaudiriti along with Vaidarbhi as the most important modes of poetic expression[2] suggests that the style had established a tradition which could no longer be ignored. It was a period when Bengal was struggling politically against the challenge of Magadha, Thanesvar and Kashmir in order to maintain the separate existence of the region. As in the political sphere so also in the domain of literature Bengal was trying to withstand

1. History of Bengal, Vol.I, ed. R.C. Majumdar, p. 216.
2. "The Gaudi Riti in Theory and Practice" by S.P. Bhattacharya, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol.III, 1927, p. 378.

the domination of almost universally accepted <u>Vaidarbhi</u> mode of expression. Ultimately she was successful in establishing her own way of literary expression. By 800 A.D. the Vernacular of Bengal took a definite form, which may be described as proto-Bengali. The final wedding of the Magadhi Prakrit and Apabhramsa dialects current in Bengal into a uniform proto-Bengali type, giving the basis of a national language to the province and thus providing a strong bond of union among its various and diverse peoples, was completed only to develop a literature and language of purely Bengali character.

Thus through many turmoils and tribulations, through long sufferings and sustained endeavours Bengal succeeded in obtaining a distinct personality. Its physical geography determined its political map. Within this area a people ultimately crystallised into a race, developed a common language to speak, a style for literary expression, a social system to guide the lives of the individuals and a culture to call its own. When the Sena empire fell to pieces before the onslaught of Muhammad-bin Bakhtyar Khalji in 1202 A.D. Bengal remained a geographical entity and the Bengalis continued as an integrated race. A new nation was born and no onslaught of whatever magnitude was capable of destroying its inner fabric. The future relation between Delhi, the centre of Muslim power in India, and Bengal, therefore, remained pre-destined in which the imperial policy came in permanent conflict with a regional ambition.

CHAPTER - II

Muhammad Bakhtiyar's invasion of Bengal and the attitude of the Turkish rulers of Delhi.

Muhammad Bakhtiyar, a Muslim adventurer carried the flag of Islam into Eastern India and planted it successfully in a part of Bihar and Bengal during a period, when, (at the turn of the thirteenth century) Sultan Muizuddin - Muhammad-i-Sam and his Turkish slave lieutenants invaded and carried on incessant warfares in Northern India with a view to establishing a Turkish empire in the country. Bakhtiyar's rise, like that of many other great adventurers, was as much due to his energy, enterprise and daring as to his opportunities and circumstances.

It is related by the trustworthy persons to Minhaj-us-Siraj that this Muhammad Bakhtiyar belonged to the Khalji[1] of Ghor, settled in Garamsir. He was not a member

1. Ibn Haukal writes that the Khaljis "are rich in cattle and their habits, customs and dress are like those of the Turks". (Kitab Moujamul Buldan, II, p.419. Vide Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1852, p.368 and 1858, p.152). Minhaj-us-Siraj, the author of Tabqat-i-Nasiri says that a body of the Khalji was a part of the Khwarazmi forces who took part in various wars of Ghur and Ghazna (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.539.) Minhaj also informs that Bakhtiyar appointed two amirs, one a Turk slave and the other a Khalji (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.152). Fakhruddin, the author of Tarikh-i-Fakhruddin Mubarak

contd ....

of an inconspicuous family. His paternal uncle Muhammad bin Mahmud[2] was in the army of Ghazni and had fought

Shahi gives a list of 64 Turkish tribes in which he includes Khalji as one of them, (Tarikh-i Fakhruddin, Text, p.47). According to Barani, the Khaljis were different a race than the Turks. (Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 175-76). Nizamuddin Ahmed opines that the Khaljis were the descendants of Qulij Khan, a son in law of Chingiz Khan. Qulij had migrated to Ghaur and Jurjisten and his people came to be known as Qalji, which due to constant use changed into Khàlji.(Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, p.116). But Badayuni writes that "there is no connection whatever between Qalij and Khalji (Muntakhab ut Tawarikh, tr. by Ranking,Vol.I, p.230). Raverty the translator of Tabqat-i-Nasiri writes that "Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar, the Khalj, who was never a slave, was one of headmen of Khalj tribe dwelling in and on the South West border of Ghur" (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.550, F.N.6). He further writes that "the Khalj are a Turkish tribe ... and a portion of them had settled in Garmsir long prior to the period under discussion ..." (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.548, F.N. 8); Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1875; Encyclopaedia of Islam, Article on Khalji; vide Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 1940, pp. 417-34; K.S. Lal, History of the Khaljis, 2nd ed., 1967, pp. 9-13; Islamic Culture, Hyderabad, Jan. 1963, Vol.XXXVII, No.1, pp. 52-53; Proceedings of Indian History Congress, 2(1938), pp. 297-303.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 549.

against Prithvi Rai at Tarain, where the latter was defeated. Muhammad's performance attracted the attention of Ali Nagauri, the Iqta-holder of Nagaur and the fief of Kashmandi was assigned to him.[1]

Muhammad Bakhtiyar, at first, came to the court of Ghazni in search of employment. The Chief of the Diwan-i-Arz allotted him a small stipend though Bakhtiyar was a very smart, enterprising, courageous, bold, sagacious and expert young man. This young Khalji, however, refused to accept the allotment offered by the Turkish Chief of the Diwan-i-Arz and left Ghazni for Delhi[2] to try his luck there. But at Delhi also he was rejected by the Turkish Chief of the Diwan-i-Arz. Minhajus Siraj has tried to justify this apathetic attitude of his Turkish masters both at Ghazni and Delhi and says that Bakhtiyar's "outward appearance was humble and unprepossessing."[3] All the modern scholars have accepted the arguments of Minhaj forgetting the race Chauvinism of the Turks.

1 Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 146.

2 Ibid., pp. 146-47.

3 Ibid., p. 146.

Racialism played a very vital role in the political life of Delhi Sultanate. In the beginning, the Turks had refused to share political power and privileges with any one outside their ranks. They considered themselves as the rulers of the country and tried to impress upon the minds of the people that "the Turk was a born ruler of men and sovereignty was his monopoly.[1] The list of officials supplied in the Tabqat-i-Nasiri of Minhaj and Barani's Tarikh-i-Firojshahi approves the contention that "the posts of authority and influence were practically monopolised by the Turks."[2] Here we should remember that the

1. Some Aspects of Muslim Administration, R.P.Tripathi, p.40; "Even a poor house-holder, who did not possess a single slave became the owner of numerous slaves, horses and camels; a man who originally owned only one horse, became a Sipahsalar and possessed a kettle-drum, standard, Naubat, all of his own." (Tarikh-i-Fakhruddin Mubarak Shahi, Text, p.20). According to the same, the Turks "while they remain among their own people and in their own country, are merely a Tribe among other tribes, and enjoy no particular power or status ... the more remote they are from their own houses and relatives the more highly are they esteemed and appreciated, they became Amirs and generalissimos." (Tarikh-i-Fakhruddin Mubarak Shahi, ed. Sir Denison Ross, pp. 36-37).

2. People and Politics in Early Medieval India, A.K.Sen, p. 10.

court-chroniclers of the Turkish Sultans of Delhi "practised an economy of truth"[1] and always tried to justify the actions of their masters. Hence the "humble and unprepossessing appearance" of Muhammad Bakhtiyar was not responsible for the apathetic attitude of the Turkish officers, rather racialist discriminating policy of the Turks had again and again blighted the prospect to find an honourable opening for Bakhtiyar.

The disappointment in getting an employment in the imperial service due to race chauvinism of the Turks, urged the boiling nomad blood of Bakhtiyar Khalji to go forward with determination to make his distinct racial mark on the history of the times. Bakhtiyar then met Sipah-Salar Malik Hizbaruddin Hasan Adil,[2] the Turkish iqtadar at Badaun, who considered him worthy only of a

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.14.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 147; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, p. 292 — According to Ferishta the name is Malik-i-Muazzam Hisamuddin Ughal Bak. This was, according to Minhaj, was the first employment of Bakhtiyar Khalji. But according to Isami his first employment was under "Jaisingha of Jitur" (Futuh-us-Salatin, Text, p. 95).

paltry amount as cash salary. The Turkish Sipah Salar sent him against the neighbouring Hindu Chief, but here also his good peffformance failed in changing his lot. He was provided with a Jagir. Naturally having failed to satisfy his ambitions, very soon, he went to Nagaur, where after the death of his uncle Muhammad bin Mahmud, Bakhtiyar became a feudatory of Kashmandi for a short time.[1]

Bakhtiyar then proceeded towards Awadh[2] and met Malik Husamuddin Aghul Bak, who held a fief of a considerable tract of country in the Doab, independent of Qutbuddin Aibak's authority. Bhagwat and Bhuili[3] "which

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.147. This is not corroborated by the other contemporary authors; little is known about Bakhtiyar's service as the "muqta" of Kashmandi, where he does not have, probably, stayed for a long period.

2. Ibid., p. 147; Muntakhab ut Tawarikh, Text, p.57, Badayuni says that he could not be happy in the company of Aibak at Lahore and hence he joined the service of Malik Husamuddin Aghul Bak.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, p.147 - The printed text has 'Sahlat' and 'Sahli', but Raverty's reading has been generally upheld (vide, Raverty, pp. 549-50). Ferishta, Vol.I, p. 292, and Nizamuddin Ahmed (Vol.I, p.47) say "Kampilah and Patiali near Badaun."

had not perhaps been previously visited by any Muslim army,"[1] were conferred upon him. Here we should remember that Aghul Bak had no control over the said tract of land and Bakhtiyar was the first Muslim, who was asked to try his luck there independently.

This assignment, however, give Bakhtiyar Khalji an opportunity for the first time to fulfil his mission of life. Love of power and wealth played a very important role in the life of an ambitious adventurer. Bakhtiyar was an ambitious non-Turkish adventurer, who rose to a very exalted status from an humble position. Like all other adventurers, he was energetic, enterprising and daring in fulfilling the ambitious mission of his life. The provinces of Northern India having been occupied by the Turks earlier, Bakhtiyar found it difficult to satisfy his ambition in the already conquered territories. He had, of necessity, chosen Eastern India comprising the territories of Bihar, Bengal and Assam as his spheres of activity. The subjective ambitious mind of Muhammad Bakhtiyar naturally inspired him to prepare a nicely calculated programme of activities which unfolded stage by stage, and led him to success.

1. The History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p. 2.

The subjective ambitious mind of the Khalji hero combined with the objective condition i.e., the morribund socio-political condition of Eastern India and the economic prosperity of the land encouraged him to take a strong, calculated programme of action, which would help him in the establishment of an independent non-Turkish Khalji Muslim rule in the region.

Lakshmanasen of the Sena dynasty, ascended the throne at the age of sixty. He "began with a brilliant career of conquest", but his "reign ended in a sea of troubles that overwhelmed him and his kingdom".[1] He conquered Gour, Kamrup and Kàlinga, and raised victory towers at Puri, Baranasi and Prayaga. His expedition upto Prayaga weakened the Gahadwar power and thus the last wall of resistance was eliminated which facilitated the forward march of the Khaljis towards Eastern India. We do not know what arrangements the Bengali king had made to protect and defend his kingdom from the new menace, who had already conquered almost the whole of Northern India. Moreover, the rising of local feudal chiefs like Dommanapala in the Eastern part of the Khari and the Deva family in the Eastern part of the river Meghna weakened the Sena rule in Bengal. This

1. The History of Ancient Bengal, R.C. Majumdar, p. 234.

unhappy political condition of Eastern India gave Bakhtiyar Khalji an opportunity to launch an offensive to fulfill his mission of life.

Being a man of valour and intrepidity, Bakhtiyar, at the initial stage, was in the habit of making incursions into the territories of the minor Gahadwar chiefs, who were easily supplanted. During these actions his men used to accumulate wealth and property for their chief. Then Bakhtiyar began to carry his depredations into Bihar and Muner and acquired great booty in the shape of men, money, arms and horses.[1] The fame of his success and the wealth he had acquired soon attracted large bodies of Khaljis, who were wandering about in different Turkish iqtas in search of employment, food and shelter. The Khaljis now found in him a leader of their own and Bakhtiyar became very powerful. It is related by Minhaj, that this reputation of Bakhtiyar reached Qutbuddin Aibak, who sent a robe of distinction and a Khilat to Bakhtiyar "with words of praise and encouragement".[2] But this is not corroborated by Hasan Nizami, who commenced his Taj-ul-Maasir, an "Account of victories" in 602 A.H. (1205 A.D.). When Hasan Nizami had been writing an "Account of

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 147.
2. Ibid.

victories", how could it be possible that he was completely in the dark in regardsto the activities of the Khaljis in the eastern region, and for the success of which Qutbuddin offered Bakhtiyar royal honours. Here we should remember that Bakhtiyar started his adventurous incursions as "a free man"[1] and on his own account. The Khaljis were never slaves under the Turks. Minhaj says that Qutbuddin Aibak did not recognise 'ugly' Bakhtiyar just a few days back. The Chronicler's real intention was to depict the majesty, authority and supremacy of Qutbuddin over all the Muslim adventurers pursuing their independent course of action in India. Minhaj was conscious about the fact that the acceptance of the title, honour and khilat by Ikhtiyaruddin from Qutbuddin Aibak, indicated his indirect acceptance of the authority of the latter and so he cooked up this story. Hence the question of removal of "the barriers of the Muslims to join Ikhtiyaruddin"[2] or "of reinvigoration of Ikhtiyaruddin"[3] as remarked by some modern scholars does not arise.

1. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p.12.

2. History of Bengal - The Middle Age Part I, S. Mondal, p. 35.

3. Ibid.

Bakhtiyar carried his depredations for a year or two into those parts of Bihar "undefended by the field army of any organised state."[1] His object was "to secure a maximum of booty at minimum of risk and bloodshed".[2] According to Minhaj,[3] Bakhtiyar went to the gate of the fort of Bihar with only two hundred horsemen, threw himself into the postern gateway of the palace, Odanadapur Vihara captured it and acquired great booty. Hasan Nizami says that when the victory was effected, Muhammad Bakhtiyar returned with great booty, and "came to the presence of the beneficent Sultan", Qutbuddin Aibak at Badaun[4] and had received great honour and distinction. This is not confirmed by Minhaj. Moreover, one should not forget that in those days there was no proper highway which might facilitate a regular communication between Delhi and the Eastern part of the country or between Bihar and Badaun. It required more than fifteen days' journey to go from

1. The History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p. 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 147; Minhaj gives no exact date of the conquest of Bihar.

4. Taj-ul-Maasir, (Vide) Elliot, and Dowson, II, p. 230.

Bihar to Badaun. According to Minhaj[1] Aibak invited the 'ugly' Bakhtiyar to Delhi, so that he might display a special mark of his favour for him. Further, it is informed that during this receoption-ceremony held at the Qasr-i-Safed[2] i.e. the white castle, Qutbuddin Aibak, due to "envious and unfriendly attitude of the Turkish amirs towards Bakhtiyar",[3] proposed to the Khalji Chief an encounter with a rampant elephant.[4] He agreed and with one blow of his mace forced the elephant to scream out and run away. This anecdote is a glaring example of the race chauvinism of the Turkish amirs. It is, however, really surprising that Hasan Nizami, who was very closely associated with Qutbuddin Aibak's court was not invited on the occasion and hence it remains unrecorded in the Taj-ul-Maasir. Bakhtiyar was in no way related with the

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 148.

2. This palace was built by Qutbuddin Aibak. (Vide Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi - p. 89). It was, first of its kind, built in the Qila of Rai Pithora in 602 A.H. (Ibid) and in this palace six of Qutb's successors were enthroned. This palace was also known as 'Daulat Khana'.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 148.

4. Rauzat-us-Safa, Text, p. 61; Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 148; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, pp. 293-94.

Turkish Government at Ghazni, Delhi or Lahore. Qutbuddin Aibak was then a slave-governor under Muhammad Ghori and hence under such circumstances one can not understand why Bakhtiyar should feel obligation to present himself at the court of Delhi. Hence, itis very difficult to rely upon the authority of either Hasan Nizami or Minhaj, particularly in regards to the relations between the Turks and other races. Taj-ul-Massir records the meeting between the Turkish chief and the Khalji Chief not at Delhi but at Badaun. In the eyes of Hasan Nizami, Bakhtiyar's activities had no importance. Casually at only one place he has referred to the meeting between the two Chiefs at Badaun and this seems to be an attempt on his part to portray the supremacy of Qutbuddin Aibak over Bakhtiyar. K.R. Qanungo[1] has tried to establish that there were two meetings between Aibak and Bakhtiyar Khalji -- one took place after the conquest of Odandapura and the next after the conquest of Varindri, i.e., North Bengal. But after the conquest of Varindri, it was not possible for Bakhtiyar to leave the conquered regions keeping it in a disorganised condition. The time must be used for the consolidation of the conquests. The

1. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, pp. 32-33.

position of the Khaljis was not yet secured till then and hence it was not possible for the Khaljis to allow their Chief to pay visit either to Badaun or Delhi accompanying his choicest troops and bodyguards.

After his initial success and occupation of Odandapura, Vikramsila and Nalanda, the Khalji Chief moved forward and reduced some other portions of South Behar to submission. The time was then occupied by Bakhtiyar in firmly establishing his authority over the conquered regions of Bihar. This has been confirmed by the author of Riyaz-us-Salatin who writes, "by establishing thanas or military outposts and by introducing administrative arrangements."[1] During the period he also busied himself in making such enquiries into the affairs of the Sena kingdom of Bengal as might facilitate the conquest of the country. Perhaps through such enquiries he succeeded in collecting information in regard to the internal administrative set-up, defence machinery and above all economic condition of the land. The economic self-sufficiency of the land, which is

1. As quoted in History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p. 3.

reflected in the contemporary indigenous writings,[1] allured him much to invade the region. He found in it

1. A few stanzas are quoted here from such literary works to show how these throw a flood of light on the prevailing economic condition and the life style of the people who had inspired these writings:

(a) "Oggara bhatta dugdha Sajutta
Moili maccha nalica gaccha
Dijjai Kanta Khai Punnabanta."

- an anonymous poet - 13th century.

Tr. (On banna leaf, the wife gives "Oggara" rice,
Pure ghee, palatable milk, "maurala" fish, nalita (leaf vegetable), etc. and the husband eats.)

(b) "Ser jai paae ghitta
Monda bees pakaila nitta,
Tanka eka jai sindhaba paya
Jo hou ranka so hoa raya."

Tr.(When anyone gets one seer of ghee, he prepares twenty "Mondas" out of it. He who gets one rupee worth of saindhaba salt, even though one is poor, the man can deem himself to be a prince.)

In the above poems we can get a vivid picture of the people of early medieval Bengal and their way of life. Perhaps they were not rich in modern sense of the term but

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an alternative to the Turkish Sultanate, which would be a safe centre of activities and settlements for the

they had no want and could avail themselves of various kinds of food- Rice, milk, ghee, fish and vegetables etc. Naturally such food items were available in plenty and the economy of the prevailing times could assure the supply of such basic requirements of life even to ordinary people. In the poem which is given below one can get a glimpse of the life style of an average well-to-do Bengali family in the country —

(c) "Putta pabitta bahutta dhana
Bhatti kutambini sudhhamana
Hakka tarasai bhicchagana
Ko kara babbara saggamana."

Tr. An ideal son, much wealth, devoted wife and obedient servants - he is the ruffian who wishes to go to heaven leaving all these (treasures).

That was the general picture of a happy family where all the members lived in a harmonious atmosphere. Such material happiness could not be achieved unless there existed a basic economic stability in the society.

All these poems, mentioned above, were written sometimes between eleventh to fourteenth century A.D.

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deprived, hated and non-privileged Khaljis. Bakhtiyar Khalji wanted to establish an independent kingdom for

and were compiled in the book "Prakrita Painjala" in the fifteenth century.

"Arya Saptasati" was written by Gobardhana Acharya in the later part of twelfth century A.D. He was one of the poets who were known as the 'famous five' of the court of Lakshmanasena. The poems of "Arya Saptasati" were written after the fashion of the "Gatha Saptasati" compiled by king Hala. All the poems of the "Arya" were love-lyrics written in a conventional manner. In these short poems, however, the poet has cast his glance over almost all spheres of social life of Bengal. It is obvious that a poet select rhetorics from his experience and all such poetic experiences may well be held both as mental as well as visual. Acharya Gobardhana was no exception to this rule. In depicting amoral life of lovers, both "swakiya" and "parakiya", hehas transcribed their mentalcondition in terms of nature. Thus he compared the lady-love in his poetic imagery to frivolous autumnal paddy knwwn as sali dhan.

(d) "Jagarayitya purusam param bane
Sarbato mukham harasi
Ae Saradanurupam taba silamidam
Jatisalinayam." (No. 237).

contd....

the Khaljis and by the Khaljis and he was sure that the economic self-sufficiency of Bengal and the distance and

Tr. Oh your nature is fickle as autumnal sali paddy. Your frivolousness is revealed as you move your face in every direction while your lover waits in the forest.

(e) "Kuta iha kurangasabaka kedare
Kalama manjari tyajasi,
Trinabana trinadhanwa trinaghatitah
Kapalapurusohayam." (No. 192)

Tr. (Oh, you fawn ! why are you at the point of leaving this cornfield. Don't be scared by this (figure) as it happens only to be an effigy made of wood with straw inside. Its bow and arrow are also made of straw.)

The above poems, in drawing a picture of illicit love, the poet, very often, describes full blown fields of various corns. Through simili, metaphor and other figures of speech the poet has created a life, which as we see is related to rich fields of crops.

Dhoyi was another poet of the famous five. In his "Devana Duta", he expresses his desire of fulfilment in a manner that shows pomp and prosperity in Bengali

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absence of proper communication between Delhi and Bengal would be able to provide it.

The Khalji Chief, accordingly, taking the available forces, set out on his next adventurous exploits in the lower Ganges Valley. Bakhtiyar marched so speedily that "not more than eighteen horsemen could keep pace with him."[1] On reaching the gate of the city of Nadia, he proceeded onwards in such manner that the people of the place mistook his party as horse-dealer. Perhaps, the sight of horse-traders was a familiar scene in the capital city and hence no curiosity was aroused among its inhabitants. Bakhtiyar did not molest anybody until the party reached the gates of the royal palace.

life. Amorous atmosphere in the poems of 'Gita-Govinda' also reflects an affluent society full of lavishness and leisure. (Vide, Prachin Bangala 'O' Bangali, Dr. Sukumar Sen, Viswabharati Prakashan; Bangala Sahityer Itihas, Khanda-I, Parba-1, Dr. Sukumar Sen; Arya Saptasati, O Gaur Banga, Prof. Jahnnabi Kumar Chakraberty; Jayadev Prabandha Sangraha, Khanda-I, Pramatha Choudhury, Viswabharati Prakashan -- all written in Bengali).

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 151.

The palace was easily occupied, the Raja left Nadia by boat and the "whole ofhis treasures, his wives, and (other) families, his domestics and servants, his particular attendants fell into the hands of the invaders. Numerous elephants were captured; such a vast amount of booty fell to their lot as is beyond all compute."[1] With the arrival of the entire army of Bakhtiyar, the whole city was brought under subjection."[2]

Bakhtiyar did not pursue the fugitive king rather he put his energy "to collect booty by sacking the city thoroughly".[3] He stayed here only for a few days and then resumed his march towards Gaur, the historic capital of Bengal. No detailed account of the seize and conquest of this capital city is available from any contemporary source, which only mentions, "Bakhtiyar left the city of Nadia in disolation, and the place which is (now) Lakhnawati, he made the seat of Government and he brought the

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text. P.151

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.; Tarikh-i-Fesishta, Text, p. 293. According to Ferishta, Nadia is situated between Lakhnawati and Bengalah.

different parts of that territory under his sway.[1] The economic prosperous condition[2] of the area allured him in establishing his government there.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 151.

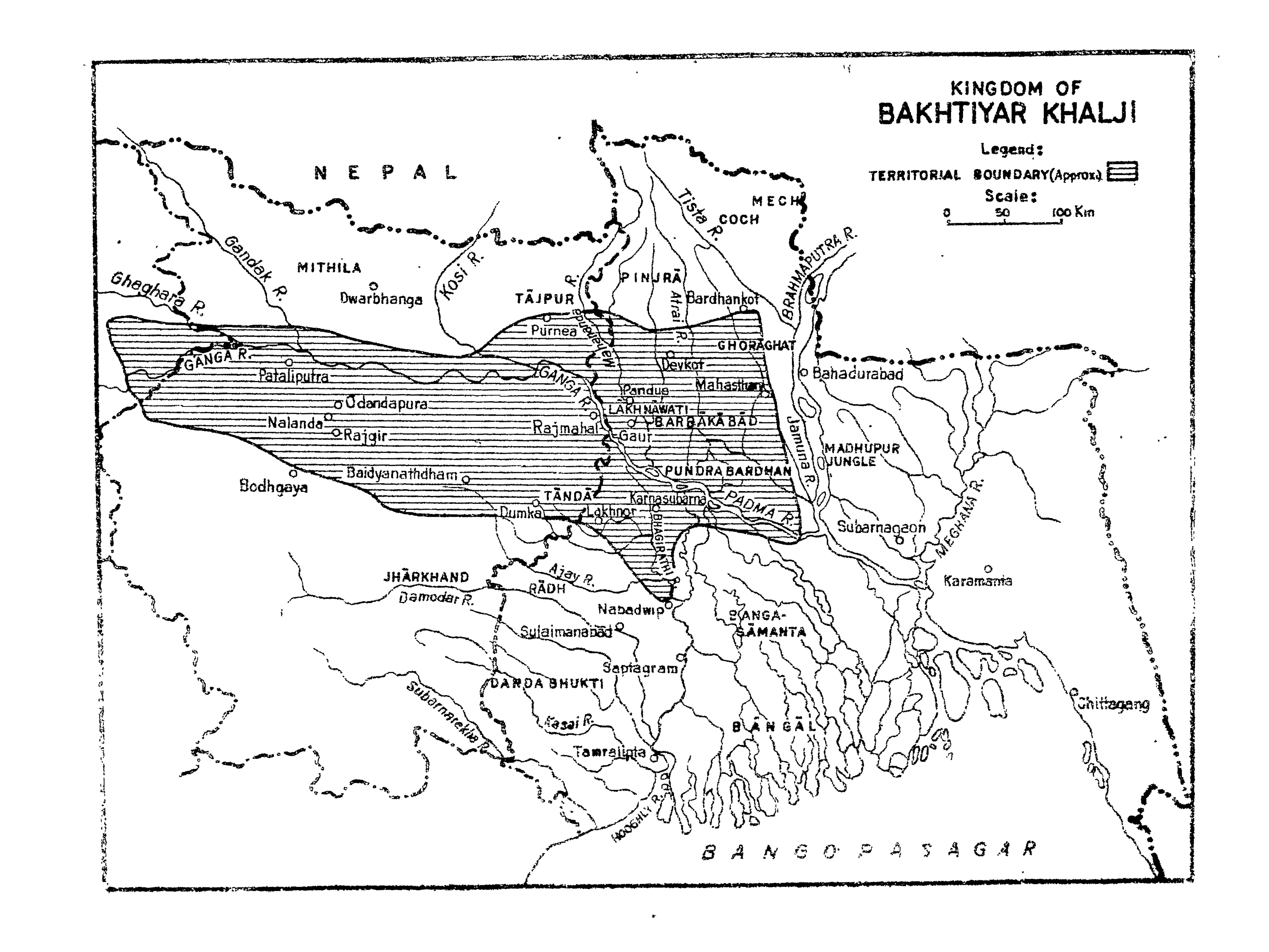
2. Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, p. 293. Ferishta says, "The territory from Gaur to the border of Bihar was called Lakhawati." Sandhyakara Nandi describes Varendri (North Bengal) as "the land which had all its important regions filled up with crops and water and had as their ornaments the groves. ... It had elevated lands bearing excellent flowers". Varendri as described by him, had large marshy lands, besides, land in which paddy plants of various kinds grew. It abounded in "sugarcane and bamboo and there were also vast fields for growing fine plants.(Ramacharita, V. 17-20, p. 91ff.). Varendri in those days was known Paundravardhana. The Mahasthan Brahmi inscription of the Maurya period refers to a rice granary located in Pundanagala (Pundranagara). (Vide, Epigraphia Indica, XXI, p. 83; Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, X, p. 57ff.). The Ramacharita mentions paddy plants of various kinds grown in Varendri. (Ramacharita, V. 17b, p. 91); Marcopolo states, "They (i.e., the Bangalees) grow cotton, in which they derive a great trade" (Travels, II, p. 115). The Ramacharita also

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During the next two years Muhammad Bakhtiyar busied himself in consolidating his newly conquered kingdom and introduced an administrative machinery for the same. He caused his name to be read in the Khutba and struck on the coins.[1] The kingdom was divided amongst his Khalji comrades, who got their respective regions as

mentions to the cultivation of sugarcane plant in Varendri. (Ramacharita, V. 17b, p. 91). The Kathasaritsagara describes Paundravardhana as a great market plce with streets lining with shops. (Kathasaritsagara, II, p. 86). The Tabqat-i-Nasiri mentions that about one thousand five hundred horses were imported into Lakhnawati from the North-East, used to be sold in the local cattle-market. (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.567). This proves that there were routes through which local traders used to maintain their import and export business with other parts of the country, and also with outside regions. This is the reason for which Bakhtiyar choiced Lakhnawati as the seat of his government. He was convinced that from this place it will be possible for him to make his kingdom materially prosperous.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 151.


KINGDOM OF
BAKHTIYAR KHALJI
Legend:
TERRITORIAL BOUNDARY (Approx.)
Scale:
0 50 100 Km
NEPAL
MITHILA
Dwarbhanga
Gandak R.
Ghaghara R.
Kosi R.
TĀJPUR
PINJRĀ
Tista R.
COCH
MECH
BRAHMAPUTRA R.
Atrai R.
Bardhankot
Purnea
GHORAGHAT
Bahadurabad
GANGA R.
Pataliputra
Devkot
Mahasthan
Pandua
LAKHNAWATI
BARBAKĀBĀD
Odandapura
Nalanda
Rajgir
Rajmahal
Gaur
Jamuna R.
MADHUPUR JUNGLE
PUNDRABARDHAN
Baidyanathdham
Bodhgaya
TĀNDĀ
Karnasubarna
PADMA R.
Dumka
Lakhnor
BHAGIRATHI R.
Subarnagaon
MEGHANA R.
Karamania
JHĀRKHAND
Ajay R.
RĀDH
Damodar R.
Nabadwip
BANGA-SĀMANTA
Sulaimanabad
Saptagram
DANDA BHUKTI
Subarnarekha R.
Kasai R.
BĀNGĀL
Chittagang
Tamralipta
HOOGHLY R.
BANGOPASAGAR

fiefs. Mosques, colleges and monasteries for Darweshes were founded throughout his kingdom, which were the centres of Islam, its culture and civilisation. It is not possible to throw any new light on the actual extent of his kingdom on the basis of any contemporary writings, coins or inscriptions. Muhammad Bakhtiyar "firmly held, besides Sarkar Lakhnauti, the major portion of the mahals of each of the six other sarkars, Tanda, Purnea, Pinjrah, Tajpur, Ghoraghat and Barbakabad of Todarmal's rent-roll of the subah of Bengal."[1]

And as regards his kingdom in Bihar "from the foot of the Vindhya hills in the Mirzapur district along the southern bank of the Ganges right up to the Rajmalah hills his authority was predominant in the greater part of South Bihar, and in addition he perhaps also held the riverine tracts on the north bank of the Ganges from the mouth of Gandak river to that of the Kosi."[2]

Having consolidated the newly founded kingdom,

1. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p. 13.

2. Ibid.

Bakhtiyar turned his eyes towards the further acquirement of territory in Tibet and Turkistan.[1]

The real motive behind this last and fatal military exploit of Bakhtiyar was not only "the lure of the fabled gold of the northern mountains"[2] or obtaining "a monopoly"[3] over Tangan horse-trade. It was not only to explore and open "a short cut route to Turkistan"[4] but to find out ways and means through which it would be possible for him to give his independent kingdom a permanent shape. Bakhtiyar was conscious about the racial attitude and discriminating policy of the Turkish war-lords towards the Khaljis and their principality of Lakhnawati. Political permanency and economic stability and self-sufficiency of the newly founded kingdom were the key-note of his policy, which

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiti, Text, p. 152; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, p. 294.

2. The History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p. 9.

3. The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India, A.B.M. Habibullah, p. 75.

4. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p. 9.

induced Bakhtiyar in undertaking the last military expedition of his meteoric career. The regular and uninterrupted inflow of warlike nomads and a mobile cavalry was the most needed military machinery for the permanence and extension of his infant kingdom. For this he wanted to find out an alternative route free from the control of the Turks of northern India. Further, the economic stability and self-suffieiency of a kingdom depend on the extension of its both import and export trade and commerce. Bakhtiyar was eager to revive, under his own control, the 'silk routes'[1] to re-establish commercial relations not only

1. North-eastern India was connected with territories outside India by overland routes. One of these was the route which connected Paundravardhana with Kamrup. It was this route which Hiuen Tsang followed in his journey to the kingdom of Kamrup in the 7th century A.D. (Vide Buddhist Records of the Western World, Beal, II, p. 195). This route did not terminate in Kamrup but ran eastwards to South China through the vast tract in which are situated the hills of Assam and upper Burma. It was a very old route which is testified to in the report submitted by Chang-Kien

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with the far-eastern countries like China but also with the west Asian countries. Probably he considered the possibility of opening of trade relations even with the Arabs and European traders. Minhaj possibly hints at this when he writes about thirty five trading

in the 2nd century B.C. (Vide, The story of Chang-Kien - F. Hirth, Proceedings of the American Oriental Society, Vol. XXXVII, 1917, p. 89ff.). This route is known to have been used as late as the 9th century A.D., when it appears tohave been connected with Annam, which had another route running from it. The itinerary of Kia Tan describes a land route from Tonkin to Kamrup, from where, coming towards the south, the river Karatoya had to be crossed. The land-route then as before terminated in Paundravardhana from where it had to be crossed to reach Kajangala and finally arrive in Magadha. (Ancient Indian colonies in the Far East, Vol.I, Champa, R.C. Majumdar). There was a difficult route through the passes of the Himalayas, past Sikkim and Chumbi valley, which extended to Tibet and China. As the Periplus shows, in the first century A.D., raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth came into Bengal from China and these are re-exported to the south (Vide, Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Periplus, Ed. Schoff, p. XIIIff.).

routes.[1] All the ideas and plans of Bakhtiyar were directed for the fulfilment of his life-mission - i.e., the establishment of an independent kingdom in Eastern India, free from any control of the Turks at Delhi.

Bakhtiyar Khalji set out from Devkot towards the close of the winter of 602 A.H. (1206 A.D.) with an

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 154. There was an important land route named Mahanmha-i-Darah (Pass), by which horses came to Lakhnauti. The road of the country of Karambatan passed through the ravines of the mountains. There were between Kamrup and Tirhut 35 passes through which horses were brought to Lakhnawati. Near about the former route, ran another which Muhammad Bakhtiyar heard about, after he invaded Bengal and went to Kamrup. This road, he was told, "after passing overthat river, for a period of 15 days, the troops wended their way, stages and journeys, through defiles and passes, ascending and descending among lofty mountains. On the sixteenth day the open country of Tibbat was reached. The whole of that tract was under cultivation, garnished with tribes of people and populous villages." - Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 565.

organised army of more than 10,000 cavalry. After a long hazardous and perilous march the Khaljis reached the open country of Tibet. From day break to the time of evening prayer a fierce encounter ensued between the Khalji army and the Tibetans. A large number of invaders were either killed or wounded and ultimately Bakhtiyar had to retreat with not more than one hundred stragglers to Devkot. After Bakhtiyar's return to Devkot, from his nearly three months of disastrous campaign, his own people did not spare him. The denunciation and reprobation of the people is described by the contemporary chronicler, "Through excessive grief sickness now overcame him, and mostly out of shame at the women and children of those of the Khalj who had perished, and whenever he rode forth all the people, from the house-tops and the streets (consisting) of women and children, would wait and utter imprecations against him and revile him, so that from henceforth he did not ride forth again."[1]

In that state of anguish Muhammad Bakhtiyar became ill and took to his bed. He was confined to his bed and "three days had passed since any person was able

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.156; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, p. 295.

to see him."[1] Ali Mardan Khalji, the fief-holder of the Eastern frontier of Khalji kingdom of Bengal got the information of the disaster and came to Devkot. He in someway went in upto him, drew the sheet from his face, and with a dagger assassinated him[2] in 602 A.H. (1206 A.D.) and thus came to an end of the life of Bakhtiyar, who was "born a free man, and lived and died a free man."[3]

The contemporary authors did not precisely mention whether Muhammad Bakhtiyar read the Khutba and issued coins in his own name or assumed the title of Sultan. Both contemporary and near-contemporary chroniclers are eager to describe the Khalji Chief as a vassal of Muhammad bin Sam and subordinate to Qutbuddin Aibak. We get a vague answer on this point from the contemporary author Minhaj, "Khutbah Wa Sikkah dar har khittah quim

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 156.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 156; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, p. 295.

3. The History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p. 12.

kard."[1] Hassan Nizami, the other contemporary author, a slave of Muhammad bin Sam started writing his book Tajul Maasir, before the death of his master. He resided both at Delhi and Lahore during the life time of his master and his co-slave, Qutbuddin Aibak. But it is surprising that the conquest of eastern India did not receive its due share in his Taj ul Maasir. It is but natural that he remained silent on the issue. Though "the Khalji's were not the slaves of Muizuddin",[2] yet the later contemporary writers like Badayunirelates that Bakhtiyar was appointed as "the ruler of the whole country of Lakhnauti in Bengala"[3] and thus tries to establish the Khalji chief as the vassal of Muhammad bin Sam of Ghor. Golam Hussain Salim in his Riyaz-us-Salatin says that Bakhtiyar was appointed by Qutbuddin Aibak as the Governor of Behar, "with orders to extend

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.151. Minhaj writes that 'instituted therein, in every part, the reading of Khutba and the coining of money.'

2. A Comprehensive History of India, Vol.V. The Delhi Sultanate, Ed. by Md. Habib & K.A. Nizami. People's Publishing House, p. 203.

3. Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Vol.II. Tr. by Ranking, p. 82.

his conquests over all neighbouring territories."[1] According to Bakshi Nizamuddin, Bakhtiyar accepted a post under Qutbuddin Aibak.[2] But the contemporary author, Minhaj nowhere mentions that Bakhtiyar was a subordinate officer of Qutbuddin, rather he was refused any job at the court of Delhi. Raverty the translator of Tabqat-i-Nasiri writes, "He had no occasion whatever to issue money in the name of Malik Kutbuddin, who was still a slave."[3]

But Raverty observes, "He certainly ruled in quasi-independence for that period; but from the expressions made use of by him in his last sickness, he evidently was loyal to Sultan Muizuddin, and he probably paid some nominal obedience to Malik Kutbuddin Ibak, as the Sultan's Deputy at Delhi. It is not to be wondered that Bakhtiyar, neither issued coin in his own name nor in the name of his sovereign's slave. Whilst that sovereign was alive - the latter would have been an impossible act."[4] This observation of Raverty does not

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin - Tr. by A. Salam, p. 59.
2. Tabqat-i-Akbari - Tr. in Bib. Ind. Series, p.50.
3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp.559-60, f.n. 8.
4. Ibid., p. 573, f.n. 9.

seem to be correct. The reference made by him in regards to his expression "can any calamity have befallen the Sultan-i-Ghazi that my good fortune hath deserted me"[1] has no foundation because, Minhaj writes in the same breath, thus, "three days had passed since any person was able to see him."[2] Then from where the contemporary author does get this 'soliloquy' of Bakhtiyar. This is another specimen through which the Delhi court-chronicler attempts to establish that Bakhtiyar accepted Md. Ghori as his sovereign. A man like Bakhtiyar could not forget the insults hurled upon him at the Turkish courts of Ghazni and Delhi. George S.A. Ranking, the translator of "Muntakhab" also echoes the views of Raverty and opines, "It appears unlikely that Muhammad Bakhtiyar issued coins in his own name, as he was nothing more than Sipahsalar of Sultan Muizuddin Md. Sam."[3] Bakhtiyar Khalji was never appointed as Sipahsalar by either Md. Ghori or by Qutbuddin Aibak. He succeeded in establishing a Khalji kingdom of his own without the assistance of the Turkish court at Delhi.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 156.
2. Ibid.
3. Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Tr. by Ranking, Vol.I, p. 83, f.n. 3.

Bakshi Nizamuddin correctly says "royal umbrellas were raised over the head of Ikhtiyaruddin, coins were inscribed and issued and Khutba was read in his name."[1] Most of the contemporary, semi-contemporary and modern scholars are unanimous that he did not assume the title of Sultan. Dwelling on the subject, Tarafdar observes "Considered from the point of view of his (Bakhtiyar's) relationship with the Delhi ruler, the Chroniclers' (Minhaj and Nizamuddin) contention that Bakhtiyar had the privilege of using the royal canopy and of having the friday sermons read and coins struck in his own name, seems quite significant....".[2] Bakhtiyar made Bengal politically free from Delhi and that was but a corollery of the hierarchical scheme of Turkish feudalism. Independent and sovereign tendencies thus began which continued with interruptions throughout the Turko-Afghan period. No coins of Bakhtiyar Khalji have yet been discovered. Only the discovery of a coin of the Khalji hero would be able to resolve the issue finally. On the basis of circumstantial evidence it can be said that Bakhtiyar Khalji was neither vassal of Muhammad bin Sam nor a subordinate to Qutbuddin Aibak. He was a full-fledged independent king, who established the Khalji

1. Tabqat-i-Akbari, tr., p. 51.
2. Husain Shahi Bengal, M.S. Tarafdar, p. 2.

kingdom of Bengal free from the control of the Turkish Government at Ghazni and that is why his murderer, Ali Mardan Khalji was graciously received at the court of Delhi.

Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji was the maker of the medieval history of independent Bengal. He followed the tradition which was built up in Bengal, through ages by his Hindu predecessors. Bakhtiyar Khalji's "chief monument of glory was the Muslim principality of Lakhnawati with tradition of independent origin which not only survived his death but went expanding into the glorious Sultanate of Gaur."[1] The adherents of Bakhtiyar Khalji gradually Bengalicised themselves and tried to follow the tradition of Bengal. Naturally, the next phase of the history of Bengal was the history of struggle between the two forces — one fighting to maintain the traditional independence of Bengal and the other, i.e., the Turkish rulers of Delhi attempting repeatedly to impose Delhi's authority over Bengal.

1. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p. 14.

POWER STRUGGLE AT LAKHNAWATI AND THE ROLE OF DELHI

On the assassination of Bakhtiyar Khalji, a new phase particularly in the field of Delhi-Bengal relations began. The Delhi Court for the first time got an opportunity to take an offensive against the independent Khalji principality of Gaur to establish it's suzerainty over Bengal. On receipt of the news of the treacherous murder of his master, Mahammad Shiran Khalji[1] marched towards Devkot to punish Ali Mardan, who had already fled away to his own fief at Narankui.[2] After performing the mourning rites for Bakhtiyar, Muhammad Shiran proceeded towards Narankui to punish the assassain. Ali Mardan

1. On the eve of his Tibet expedition, Muhammad Bakhtiyar despatched Muhammad Shiran and his brother Ahmed Shiran with an army towards Lakhnor and Jajnagar. Moreover, during the sack of Nadia by Bakhtiyar, Muhammad Shiran was not with the main force for three days, after which he returned with eighteen elephants (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 157).

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 574; some writers state that Shiran marched from Devkot to Barsala, the fief of Ali Mardan. Barsala was in the Ghoraghat region. (History of Bengal, Dacca University, pp. 35-36).

was seized and was put in charge of its kotwal, Baba Ispahani. On his return to Devkot, Muhammad Shiran was unanimously elected as the ruler of Lakhnawati by all the Khalji Amirs. Each Amir was allowed to continue in his respective fief and even the partisans of the rebel, Ali Mardan was not disturbed. Muhammad Shiran was "a man of great intrepidity and energy, and of examplary conduct and qualities."[1] He was conscious about the attitude of the Turkish Amirs of Delhi towards the independent Khalji principality of Gaur and hence he wanted to settle the unsettled condition of this infant principality, which was seriously affected due to the failure of Tibet expedition and the assassination of his master, Bakhtiyar Khalji.

But Muhammad Shiran Khalji was not destined to live in peace for a long time. Ali Mardan, in the meantime, adopted some means and entered into a compact with the Kotwal, Baba Ishpahani, got out of prison, and went off to thecourt of Delhi. Thus the Turks of Delhi, for the first time, got an opportunity to use one Khalji Amir of Bengal against the independent Khalji principality of Lakhnawati. The lord of Delhi, Qutbuddin Aibak so long

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 574.

could do nothing to assert Delhi's suzerainty over Bengal till the Khaljis themselves become involved in some sort of a civil war for the premier position in Bengal.

Ali Mardan who betrayed the cause of the Khaljis and interests of Bengal, was graciously received at the court of Delhi. He persuaded Qutbuddin Aibak to despatch Qaimaz Rumi, the Governor of Awadh towards Lakhnawati with instructions ostensibly to settle iqtas of the Khalji Amirs suitably.

Qaimuz Rumi marched towards Bengal after the rainy season of 1207 A.D. Malik Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji, the feudatory of Gangtori,[1] went forth to receive the Governor of Awadh and along with him proceeded towards Devkot. Muhammad Shiran evacuated the city and Humasuddin Iwaz "becamethe fief-holder of Devkot at the suggestion of Qaimuz Rumi."[2] Thus for the first time Turks of Delhi got the opportunity of disturbing the

1. According to History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p. 37, it is situated in Sarkar Tanda of Todarmal's Rent-roll.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 158.

independence of the Khalji principality of Bengal and ruling it through a protege of Delhi. The dream of Bakhtiyar Khalji was thus temporarily shattered. But his other comrades in arms were not ready to surrender themselves so easily. They under their leader Muhammad Shiran Khalji re-assembled, and marched upon Devkot. Being apprised of this sort of events Qaimaz Rumi at once retraced his steps from Bihar and an encounter took place between the Khalji Amirs and the Delhi's imperialist forces. Muhammad Shiran Khalji and his comrades were decisively defeated, who fled in the direction of Moseda and Santosh. Thus due to treachary and defection on the part of two comrades of Bakhtiyar Khalji ended the independence of Bengal after a short rule of about a year of Muhammad Shiran Khalji.

Nothing is definitely known about Muhammad Shiran Khalji after his retreat from Devkot. Neither Husamuddin Iwaz did disturb him at Moseda and Santosh nor Muhammad Shiran did any attempt to restore his authority over Devkot. Minhaj informs that after his retreat disagreement arose amnng the Khaljis and Muhammad Shiran was slain.[1]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.576; Riyaz-u-Salatin, tr, A. Salem, p.69, says that he was slain by Ali Mardan Khalji within eight months of his accession.

No significant incident occurred in Bengal for about two years, when Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji ruled over major part of the Khalji principality of Lakhnawati as a vassal of the Delhi Sultanate. Only with the reappearance of Ali Mardan Khalji in the political scene of Bengal that the peace of that region was again disturbed.

The territory of Lakhnawati was assigned by Qutbuddin to Bakhtiyar's assassin, Ali Mardan Khalji,[1]

1. Ali Mardan accompanied Qutbuddin Aibak in his expedition against Malik Tajuddin Yalduz of Ghazni, who had invaded Punjab. He fell a prisoner in the hands of the Turks of Ghazni. There he came into contact with a Khalji amir named Salar Zafar. It is said that one day when Ali Mardan had gone on a hunting excursion in the retinue of Sultan Tajuddin, he told Salar Zafar thus, "What sayest thou if, with one arrow, I should slay Tajuddin Yalduz, within this "Shikaz-gah" and make thee a sovereign?" The Salar Jafar was a very sagacious person, and he was shocked at this speech, and prohibited him from such a deed. When Ali Mardan came back from the hunting expedition, Salar Zafar presented him two horses, and sent him away towards Hindustan. After his return, he received an honorary robe from Qutbuddin Aibak and was treated with great favour. (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 577-78).

who "was a man of vast energy, vehement, intrepid and daring."[1] Ali Mardan proceeded towards Lakhnawati with "a large following of sturdy and adventurous Turks"[2] to take up his new responsibility, and when he had crossed the river Kosi, Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji came from Devkot to give him a hearty welcome. Ali Mardan assumed the government on behalf of the Delhi Sultan and peacefully brought the whole of the country of Lakhnawati under his sway. This was the second occasion when a Turnish army under the command of a Khalji marched upon Bengal.

But very soon, Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak died (1210 A.D.) and Ali Mardan, threw off his mask of allegiance, assumed a canopy of state and read the Khutbah in his own name and styled himself with the title of Sultan Alauddin.[3] Hence Bengal again shook off the tutelage of Delhi and regained its independence. It can be said that though Ali Mardan betrayed the cause of Bengal and helped the Turkish lord of Delhi in establishing their suzerainty over this part of the country, yet in fine, he followed

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 576.

2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.18.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 159.

the tradition of his master, Bakhtiyar by declaring his independence at an opportune moment. This is a special feature of the early medieval history of Bengal that Delhi again and again, tried to maintain its hold over this part of India by appointing its nominees as governors but the latter whenever got the opportunity never hesitated in raising the standard of rebellion.

But Ali Mardan alias Sultan Alauddin being a blood-thirsty and sanguinary man inaugurated a reign of terror in Bengal. He sent his Turkish army in different directions, and put the greater number of the Khalji Amirs to death as he was conscious of his black deeds which were still green in the memory of the Khaljis of Bengal. The Rais of the adjacent parts grew apprehensive of him and sent him presents and tribute.

This sudden rise to power turned the head of Sultan Alauddin with vanity and he began to issue orders to various parts of India, and, to uttermost extravagant vaunts before the assembly, and in open court he talked about the kings of Khorasan, Ghazni and Ghor, and uttered the most useless absurdities.[1] He even talked

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 578.

of sending his mandates to Ghazni, Khorasan and Iraq calling upon them to submit to his rule.

To such a degree was the haughtiness and severity and false pride of Ali Mardan reached that the poor people, the peasants, the army and particularly the old Khalji nobility were tired of his tyranny and cruelty. The clash of interest, between the old Khalji nobility and the foreign soldiery, the new comers who came in the train of Ali Mardan, precipitated a new power-struggle in Bengal. The Khalji chiefs combined themselves under the only surviving lieutenant of Bakhtiyar, Husamuddin Iwaz and raised the standard of rebellion. Ali Mardan was killed in the confrontation and the victorious Khalji Amirs placed Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji upon the throne of Lakhnawati.[1]

With the end of Sultan Alauddin a new phase in the history of Bengal began. During this phase the independent Bengal Sultanate got the recognition of the

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 160.

Abbaside Caliph of Baghdad, which was the cherished dream of all the Muslim Kings of Asia. In fact, Iwaz Khalji was the first Muslim ruler in India, who secured a formal recognition to his regal status from the highest pontiff of Islam. "His rival and contemporary of Delhi", writes Abdul Jamad Khan, "namely Iltutmish only followed his example when he applied for it in Jamada I, 626, about 7 years later. By obtaining the sanctification of his authority from the Caliph, Iwaz strengthened his claims against the pretensions of his Delhi rival."[1] And thus the humble and modest beginning which was made by Bakhtiyar Khalji was led to its culmination by one of his lieutenants, Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji. He also stamped "the coins of the territory of Lakhnawati and the Khutbah was read in his name and he assumed the title of Sultan Ghiyasuddin."[2] Iwaz Khalji's coins of 616/1219 A.D. all bear the legend 'Sultan-ul Husain-Nasir Amir-ul Momenin."[3] But his coins of 619/1222 A.D. bear a new legend 'Sultan

1. Vide, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1944, pp. 268-69.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 161.

3. Vide, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, p. 268.

ul Azam Ghiyasuddaniya Waddin Abul Fath Iwaz bin Al-Husain Wali-i Ahdehi Ala-ul Haqwa'ddin' on the reverse and 'An Naser-l-Dinikhan, Amirul Momenin' on the obverse. Dwelling on the subject, Abdul Jamad Khan observes that the coins of 619 A.H. "are important for more reasons than one. First, we find Iwaz assuming the higher title of 'sultan ul. Azam; second, the Caliph is definitely named; third, a successor is nominated and proclaimed on the legends of the coin for public information."[1] In the coins of the year 620 A.H. Iwaz Khalji assumes higher title of 'Sultan us Salatin - Qasim-i-Amirul Momenin,' and the name of the Caliph remained unaltered, while the name of the crown prince Alaul Haq is substituted by 'Muizzudduniya Wa'ddin Abul Muzaffar Ali Burhan-i-Amirul Momenin'.[2] The tradition of Bengal's independence thus received a fresh mementum from Iwaz Khalji. He was anxious "to leave to his successors a sortof safe inheritance within the constitutional frame work of the Khilafat. The Bengal ruler seems to have tried to assert his claim to Muizzi legacy in Indian politics by showing his political connection with the Ghoride ruling family

1. Vide Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1944, p. 268.

2. Ibid.

of Ghazna. He adopted these measures (his application to himself the regal titles assumed by Muhammad bin Sam) perhaps with a view to stabilising his political position against Iltutmish."[1]

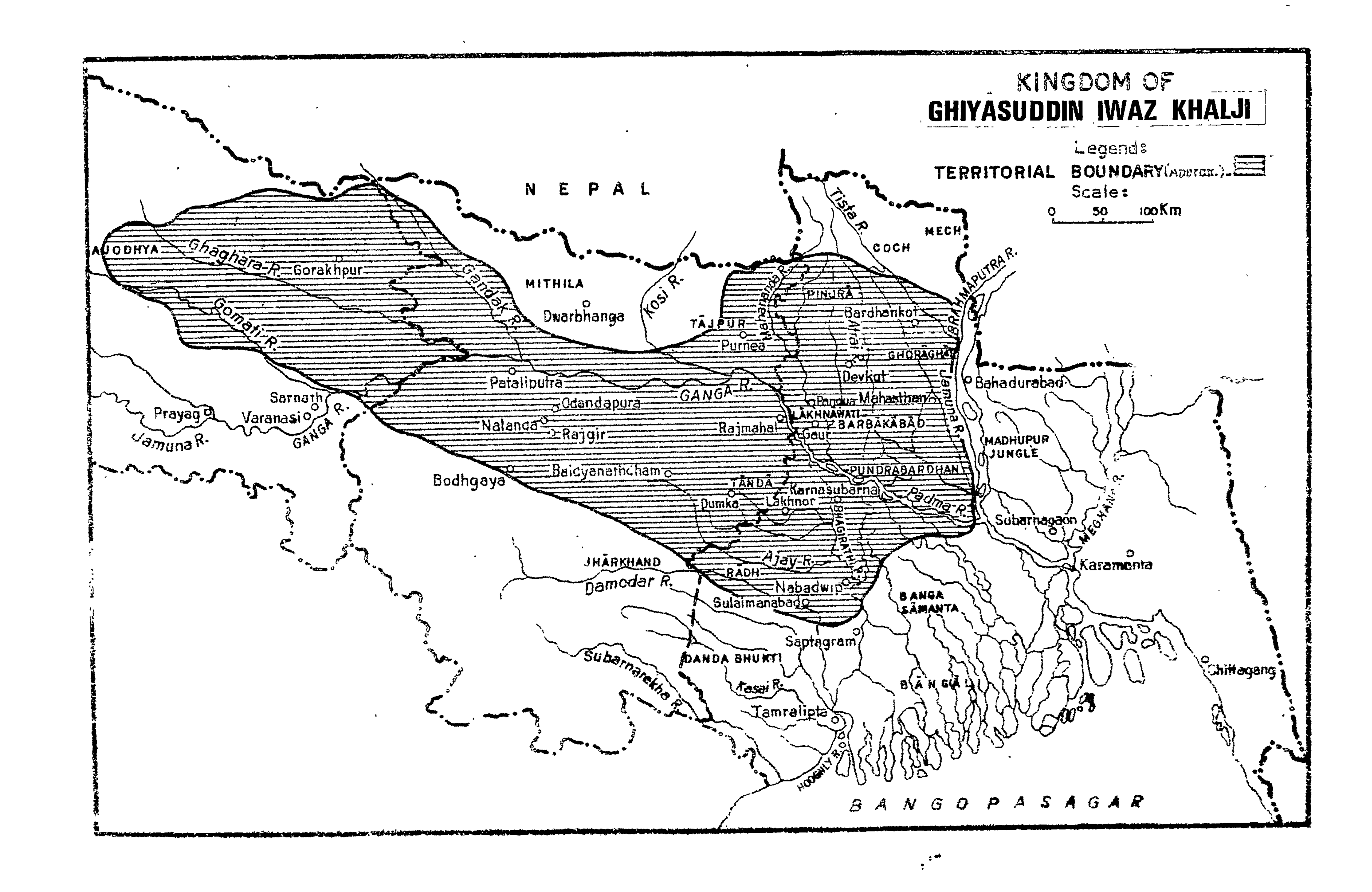
Iwaz Khalji made the city of Lakhnawati the seat of Government and founded the fortress of Basankot. He also built a highway connecting the capital with the two major outposts of Muslim Bengal, Devkot and Lakhnor in the north and the south respectively.[2] Hence it must be admitted that Iwaz raised the Muslim principality of Lakhnawati to the status of an independent kingdom for all practical purposes.

Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji was a man of pleasing mien, of exceedingly handsome appearance and he was magnanimous, just and munificent. People flocked to him from all quarters and during his beneficient rule, the army and the people in general lived peaceful and easy life.

The independence of Bengal was left undisturbed for a period of twelve years between 610 and 622 A.H.(1213-25 A.D.)

1. Husain Shahi Bengal, M.S. Tarafdar, p. 2.

2. Vide Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1944, p. 267.


KINGDOM OF
GHIYASUDDIN IWAZ KHALJI
Legend:
TERRITORIAL BOUNDARY (Approx.)
Scale:
0 50 100Km
NEPAL
AJODHYA
Ghaghara R.
Gorakhpur
Gomati R.
Gandak R.
MITHILA
Dwarbhanga
Kosi R.
TAJPUR
Purnea
Mahananda R.
PINJRA
Bardhankot
Atrai R.
GHORAGHAT
Devkot
Mahasthan
Pandua
LAKHNAWATI
BARBAKABAD
Gaur
Rajmahal
Tista R.
COCH
MECH
BRAHMAPUTRA R.
Jamuna R.
Bahadurabad
MADHUPUR JUNGLE
PUNDRABARDHAN
Padma R.
Subarnagaon
MEGHNA R.
Karamanta
Patalipatra
GANGA R.
Odandapura
Nalanda
Rajgir
Baidyanathdham
Bodhgaya
Sarnath
Varanasi
Prayag
Jamuna R.
GANGA R.
TANDA
Karnasubarna
Dumka
Lakhnor
BHAGIRATHI R.
Ajay R.
JHARKHAND
RADH
Damodar R.
Nabadwip
Sulaimanabad
BANGA SAMANTA
Saptagram
DANDA BHUKTI
Subarnarekha R.
Kasai R.
Tamralipta
HOOGHLY R.
BANGAL
Chittagang
BANGOPASAGAR

during which the Turkish court of Delhi did not find time to meddle in the Eastern affairs. During this period of uninterrupted peace Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji did not allow his sword to rust in the scabbard. "Jajnagar, the countries of Bang, Kamrup and Tirhut - all sent tribute to him."[1] It is difficult to determine the extent of his kingdom. Only on the basis of stray records, it can be presumed that his kingdom "consisted of Sarkars Lakhnawati, Purniah, Tajpur, Panjrah, Ghoraghat, Barbakabad, the western part of Bazuha, on the north and east of the Ganges, Tanda, Sharifabad, a portion of Sulaimanabad south of that river. He re-annexed South Bihar and pushed his frontier upto that of the Delhi province of Oudh as far as the mouth of Gandak in North Bihar."[2]

Again it was he who realised the importance of defending the capital city, garrisoning troops and building a naval power to meet the challenge of Delhi from a position of strength. The tradition of Bengal's independence and sovereignty thus got a firm footing, during his rule. His court at Lakhnawati rivalled that of Delhi in grandeur and magnificence.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 163.
2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.29.

This establishment of an independent and parallel government under the Khaljis, it's extension of boundary upto the frontier of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi and last but not the least its recognition by Abbaside Caliphate could not be expected to be tolerated by the Turks, who, since their seizure of power in Northern India, had been pursuing a racial discriminating policy towards the Khaljis. Hence the status of Bengal as raised by Iwaz Khalji had been galling to the pride and prestige of the reigning Sultan of Delhi.

Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish "on several occasions; sent forces from Delhi, towards Lakhnawati, and acquired possession of Bihar, and installed his own Amirs therein."[1] In the year 622 A.H.[2] (1225 A.D.) the Delhi Sultan himself marched towards Lakhnawati and Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz moved forward from his capitalwith his

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.163, Hasan Nizami has also seems tohave referred to this event (Vide Elliot & Dowson, Vol. II, p. 241.)

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.171; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 70; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, p. 66.

army and advanced his warboats up the river Ganges to oppose him. The two armies met somewhere between Monghyr and Telliagarhi[1] but what followed next is not mentioned by any contemporary chronicler. It is only mentioned that a treaty of peace was concluded between them. According to terms of the peace treaty the Bengal Sultan agreed to pay a heavy indemnity worth eighty lakhs of treasure and thirty-eight elephants; and accepted the suzerainty of the Delhi Sultan by reading the Khutbah and issuing coins in the name of the Delhi Sultan. Sultan Ghiyasuddin here had to adopt a policy of one step backwardfor two steps forward because he was sure that with the withdrawal of the imperialists he would get the opportunity to reaffirm and restore the power and positions of the kingdom of Bengal. To weaken the ruler of Lakhnawati, Iltutmish separated Bihar from Bengal and conferred Bihar upon a Turkish Amir, Malik Alauddin Jani.[2] But soon after the departure of Delhi Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz marched into Bihar, drove out the Delhi's nominee and took possession of it.[3] Thus the

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 72.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 189.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 594; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 72.

sultan of Bengal threw off, the "peace treaty" and restored independence and sovereignty of his kingdom. The Sultan of Delhi on the other hand, had to digest the insult for a period of two years.

Sultan Giiyasuddin remained alert at his capital with his army and navy for a year, expecting a retaliatory measure from the side of the Delhi Sultan. At this time Iltutmish was busy with a rebellion under the leadership of one Prithu of Awadh who killed "a hundred and twenty thousand musalmans".[1] The Delhi Sultan had to send a reinforcement under his son, Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud towards Awadh for the suppression of the rebellion. Malik Alauddin Jani, the expelled governor of Bihar joined the prince and became his chief adviser. Both the prince and Alauddin Jani, after suppressing the rebellion, concentrated their forces on the frontier of Tirhut. But the Sultan of Bengal scented no danger immediately from the movement of the imperialists. And so he left the capital city unprotected and led an expedition towards Bang and Kamrup.[2] The imperialist's army under the prince suddenly dashed into the unprotected Bengal capital in 624 A.H. In consequence of which the Bengal

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 170.

2. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 72.

capital was practically conquered without any opposition. But as soon as intelligence was received by Sultan Ghiyasuddin, he hastened to meet the challenge of the Delhi army. But it was too late because by that time the invading forces of Delhi had already seized the capital city and occupied the fortress at Basankot. A pitched battle was fought outside the capital; and after exhibiting many proofs of valour, the Bengal Sultan and his nobles became captives, and were put to death by the victorious forces of Delhi.[1]

Thus came to an end of the reign of a great ruler, who "came like a veritable blessing of the Almighty"[2] to the unhappy people of Bengal. During his "magnanimous, just and munificent"[3] rule the "troops and inhabitants of that country enjoyed comfort and tranquillity; and through his liberality and favour,

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 180-181; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 72; Futah-us-Salatin, Text, p. 119; Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Text, p. 64; Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, p. 66.

2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.28.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 583.

all acquired great benefits and reaped numerous blessings".[1] Even Sultan Iltutmish at a later occasion had to pay a glowing tribute to the memory of this great king of Bengal and Minhaj-us-Siraj, the court historian of Delhi described Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji as "a monarch worthy, just and benevolent."[2]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 588.
2. Ibid., p. 587.

CHAPTER -III.

BENGAL'S RELATIONS WITH THE TURKISH SULTANS OF DELHI

Independence and sovereignty of Lakhnawati was again lost and a new phase began in the history of Bengal. With the fall of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji, Bengal, for the first time, was brought under the effective control of the Turkish court of Delhi by the appointment of prince Nasiruddin Mahmud as its governor. Delhi authorities, since then adopted the policy of appointing their slaves to the office of viceroy of the province, to bring it under permanent subjection. But this policy of the lords of Delhi was mostly frustrated as whoever was put on the "takht" of Bengal soon revolted against Delhi under favourable circumstances. The hold, acquired over the territory of Lakhnawati by Iltutmish, appears to have been very partial and temporary. According to Barani, it was the habit and practice of the people of Lakhnawati to raise their standard of rebellion against the lords of Delhi and Lakhnawati henceforth came to be known as "Bulghakpur" or the city of rebellion to the Sultans of Delhi.[1] The governors sent from the court of Delhi, taking the advantage of the economic self-sufficiency of the region and the distance and absence of proper

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 82.

communication, used to raise the standard of rebellion against Delhi. If any viceroy failed to follow the tradition, others would rise up against him, would murder him, and seize the country. Delhi authorities, on the other hand, during this period never gave up their attempts to reduce this "rebel Bengal" to subjection. Moreover, during this period, the governors of different provinces of the eastern region, particularly those of Bihar, Awadh, Kanauj, and Kara-Manikpur, were also guided by the highest ambition to seize the royal "takht" of Lakhnawati, because it had already succeeded in creating its distinct entity in the body politic of the sub-continent. All the governors were eager to enjoy some sort of sovereignty, and Lakhnawati was the place, which could provide them with all the facilities to reach this goal. They were also eager to be entitled to the coveted status and title of "Malik ush Sharq", i.e., Lord of the East, which was at first bestowed upon Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud, the Governor of Lakhnawati, by his father Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish.

Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was a "beneficent, intelligent, sensible, and sagacious prince, and was endowned with great energy and gallantry, munificent and benevolent."[1] This prince, the victor of Sultan

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 180.

Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji, was appointed as governor of Lakhnawati, and he brought the two provinces of Bengal and Awadh under one rule. From Lakhnawati he sent treasures in the shape of presents to all the Ulama, the Sayyids, devotees, recluses, and pious men at the Imperial Capital. When the robes of honour reached Delhi from the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustansir Billah on Monday, the 22nd of the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, 626 A.H. (February 1229 A.D.), the affectionate father, Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, from among them, "selected one dress of great value and despatched it to Lakhnawati along with a red canopy of state."[1] Malik Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was also exalted by the bestowal of that canopy of state, the dress of honour, and great distinction of the title of 'Malik-ush-Sharq'. Coins were also minted at Lakhnawati in the name of Prince Nasiruddin. All the Maliks began to consider the Prince as the heir apparent of Shamsuddin Iltutmish. But the decree of destiny was otherwise. Very soon, after a period of one and a half years' rule, the prince was afflicted with disease and died. The Delhi envoys, who brought the royal gifts to Lakhnawati, went back to the capital with the news of the sad demise of the Prince in the month, Jamadi-us-sani of

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 181.

626 A.H. (May, 1229 A.D.).[1] The dead body of the Prince was brought to the capital and buried at "Sultan Ghazi's Maqbara"[2] which was built in 629 A.H. (1231-32 A.D.).

On the death of prince Nasiruddin, the Khaljis again raised the standard of rebellion under their leader, Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Balka Khalji,[3] and seized

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 181.

2. List of the Mahammadan and Hindu monuments of Shah Jahanabad, p. 56. An inscription on this mausoleum entitled him as Malik-ush-Sharq. (vide Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1909-10, p. 70).

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 163, he is called Ikhtiyaruddin Balka, but on Text, p. 174, he is simply called Balka Malik Khalji. Raverty (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, p. 617, f.n. 5) says that Balka Malik was the son of Husamuddin Iwaz (Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz), the Khalji. But no such statement is found in the text of Tabqat-i-Nasiri. On the other hand Isami mentions his name simply as Balka (Futuh-us-Salatin, p. 120) and in the Riyaz-us-Salatin (vide p.73), the name is given as Hussamuddin Khalji and he is clearly described as one of the nobles of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji. In the list of Iltutmish's maliks supplied by Minhaj one Daulat

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the royal "takht" of Lakhnawati. The sudden and premature death of the Prince shocked the Delhi Sultan so much, that he remained an onlooker on the affairs of Bengal for a long period of eighteen months. During this period Balka Khalji succeeded in maintaining his undisturbed independent rule in Lakhnawati. Thus separatist tendencies against raised their heads and in the year 628 A.H. (November, 1230 A.D.) Shamsuddin Iltutmish having overcome the grief led "the contingents of Hindustan" into Lakhnawati "to quell the sedition."[1] The rebel-lord of Bengal, during the show-down, was captured and beheaded. Thus another attempt of the

Shah Khalji, malik of Lakhnawati, is mentioned but no Balka. Hence confusion increases. Besides, there is a coin in which one styles himself as Shahanshah Alauddin Abu Maab (Abu Ghazi) Daulat Shah bin Maudad. The date can be read as 627 A.H. (vide, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, 1873, p. 367; Coins and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi, H.N. Wright, p.21). On the basis of this numismatic evidence, it can be presumed that Balka Khalji was not a son of Iwaz Khalji.

1. Tabqat-in-Nasiri, Text, p.174; Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, p. 60; Munatakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Text, p. 67; Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, p.66; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p.73.

Khaljis to restore their political right on the seat of the Government of Bengal was frustrated.

The Delhi Sultan, before his return march, separated[1] the provinces of Bengal and Bihar, and conferred the Government of Bengal upon Malik Alauddin Jani. The governorship of Bihar was given to Malik Saifuddin Aibak. Iltutmish reached Delhi on the month of Rajab of the year 628 A.H. (May, 1231 A.D.).

Malik Alauddin Jani, the newly appointed Governor of Bengal, was born of blue blood and Minhaj has depicted him as 'Shah-zadah of Turkistan'. The contemporary chronicler is silent on the activities of this Governor of Bengal, the first Muslim ruler of Lakhnawati, who had royal ancestry and princely qualities. He ruled perhaps for a period of one year and a few months, and there after he was removed by the Delhi Sultan[2] from the office and replaced by Malik

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, pp. 231, 242.

2. Minhaj (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 239) does not give any date of this incident. The Riyaz-us-Salatin, (Tr. A.Salam, p. 73) assigns Jani a rule of three years, while the History of Bengal, Dacca University, (Vol.II,

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Saifuddin Aibak, the Governor of Bihar. The causes of the removal and the date of the same is not mentioned by the contemporary authority. Perhaps Alauddin Jani's royal ancestry prevented him from following up the directives of the Delhi court. He was not a slave and his independent and princely attitude towards the Delhi authorities was probably the cause of a conflict, for which he was removed from the office of the governorship of Lakhnawati.

After this dismissal, Saifuddin Aibak, a Qara-Khitai Turk and a slave of the Delhi Sultan, Iltutmish, took the charge of the coveted office of Lakhnawati. The Delhi Sultan purchased this 'tatar' from the heirs of Ikhtiyaruddin Chust Qaba. Very soon Saifuddin succeeded in distinguishing himself and Sultan Iltutmish conferred upon him the office of Amir-i-Majlis. He had performed good service in the office and was raised to the position of the fief-holder of

p.45) has one year and a few months. Alauddin Jani is next mentioned as Governor of Lahore who later on created much trouble during the reign of Raziyah and was finally beheaded. (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 634, 640).

Sarsuti. Malik Saifuddin Aibak, who had been the governor of Bihar since 625 A.H. (1227 A.D.) proceeded towards Lakhnawati and, in his place, another Turkish slave-officer, named Malik Izzudin Tughil Tughan Khan was appointed to Bihar.[1]

Malik Saifuddin Aibak, the new Governor of Lakhnawati, succeeded greatly in distinguishing himself as a front-ranking malik of his age through his activities in Bengal. On one occasion he made a raid "on the territory of Bang" and "captured a number of elephants", which he "despatched to Delhi". Sultan Iltutmish was highly pleased for the presents and rewarded the Bengal Governor with the title of "Yaghan-Tat". Malik Saifuddin hold the Government of Bengal until 631 A.H. (1233 A.D.)[2] when he died at Lakhnawati.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, Pp. 231, 242.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 731-32. Sultan Iltutmish had appointed Malik Alauddin Jani in 628 A.H. and Saifuddin died in 631 A.H. Hence the account of Riyaz-us-Salatin (Text, pp.73-74) that each of these governors ruled for three years does not seem to be correct.

Malik Izzuddin Tughral Tughan Khan, another slave of the imperial household, was next asked by the Delhi Sultan to take up the responsibility of the Government of Bengal.[1] The two provinces of Bengal and Bihar were again brought under the charge of Tughral Tughan Khan. But before Tughan Khan could take up his new office, one Aor Khan Aibak, "a Turk of great daring and impetuosity", the Muqta of the city of Lakhnawati, seized the royal power of Bengal.[2] This forcible occupation of the Government of Lakhnawati by Aor Khan brought him in a conflict with Tughral Tughan Khan, the newly appointed Governor of Bengal, who, without having any previous permission of the Delhi authority, led his army across the frontier to enforce his claim. A battle was fought and during the action an arrow-shot from Tughral Tughan killed Aor Khan.[3]

Malik Izzuddin Tughral Tughan Khan, a Qara-Khitai Turkish slave of Sultan Iltutmish, trained

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 242.

2. History of Bengal, Dacca University, Vol. II, p.45.

3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p.243.

himself in the royal house-hold of his master in different capacities such as Saqi-i-Khas, Sar-dawatdar, Chasnigir and Amir-i-Akhur. In 630 A.H. (1232 A.D.) he was made feudatory of Badaun and lastly became the Governor of the united territories of Bihar and Lakhnawati.

Meanwhile Sultan Iltutmish died in 633 A.H. (1236 A.D.) and a battle in the royal family for succession began at Delhi. Tughral Tughan Khan did not become a party in the court-politics of Delhi rather he tried to maintain good relations with the Delhi authorities, irrespective of persons who came to power. During the reign of Sultan Ruknuddin Firoz Shah presents were despatched to the capital but "the whole treasure of Lakhnawati was seized"[1] on the way by Malik Ghiyasuddin Muhammad Shah, a younger brother of the Delhi Sultan, at Awadh. Since then Tughan Khan tried to follow a policy of reading the 'Khutba' and issuing coins in the name of the reigning monarch at Delhi. As a result his rule got an undisturbed long lease of life. He sent his messenger to Sultan Raziyah and received[2] from her

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 633.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 242; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p.75.

a 'Chatr' and a red banner, which formally recognised his authority over Bengal and Bihar. Tughral Tughan always wanted to keep the Delhi authorities in good humour, because he had an ulterior motive, which is reflected in the title,[1] which he adopted. On the one hand he followed a policy of keeping the Delhi Sultans in good humour by sending customary presents, and on the other, pursued an aggressive policy towards the other eastern provinces under the Delhi Sultanate. He wanted to build up an Eastern Sultanate. To fulfil this mission, a strong army, consisting of cavalry and infantry, was raised and a powerful navy was also built up.

Tughral Tughan inaugurated his imperialist policy with a successful raid into the kingdom of Tirhut. Like Iwaz, Tughral also was conscious of the strategic

1. Majlis-i-Ala .... Ghyas-al-Islam wa-al-Musalmain, Mughis-al-Muluk wa al-Salatin Abi-al-Fatha Tughral al-Sultani. This inscription is found at Baridargah Bihar Sharif, and dated 640 A.H. (Vide Jounral of Asiatic Society, Bengal, 1873, p. 45). Cunningham, Reports, XV, p.45; Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1913-14, pp. 16-17.

importance of Tirhut which controlled the main entrance to Bengal. "Political developments characterizing the history of medieval Tirhut clearly indicates that Delhi or Jaunpur rulers did not fail to adopt adequate measures to counter Bengal influences in that country."[1] Sultan Muizuddin Bahram Shah failing to resist Tughral, recognised his authority and the Bengal Sultan was in the continual habit of sending presents of great value to the court of Delhi.[2] He seized rich booty and sent a portion of that to Delhi only to show his apparent loyalty to Sultain Muizuddin Bahram Shah. Towards the end of Bahram's reign Tughral reannexed Bihar without the least resistance from Delhi.

At the beginning of the reign of Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah, Tughral Tughan as advised by Kan-Khuda Bahandri Hilal decided to establish his supremacy over Awadh, Kara-Manikpur andthe Ganga-Jamuna Doab. Tughral Tughan, accordingly, marched forward with his strong army and navy from his base of operations in

1. Husain Shahi Bengal, M.S. Tarafdar, p.7.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 737.

Bihar in the beginning of 640 A.H. (1242 A.D.).[1] He faced no resistance from any quarter, i.e., either from the side of the Delhi authorities or from any provincial governor and marched across Chunar, Benares and Allahabad and reached at the frontier of Kara. In the meantime, Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah appointed Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Qara Qash Khan as the Governor of Kara,[2] who had not yet reached to assume the office. But before any confrontation took place between Tughral Tughan and Qara Qash Khan; theformer "despatched Sharf-ul-Mulk, the Ashari, to the court of Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah"[3] with valuable presents. Alauddin Masud Shah accepted the presents without any hesitation and in return Kazi Jalaluddin Kashani, the Kazi of Awadh, "was deputed along with the Sharf-ul-Mulk, bearing a rich robe of honour, a canopy of state, a standard and tent, coupled with much honour and reverence, to return to Lakhnawati."[4]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 243; Raverty, p.737, f.n. 9.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 747.

3. Ibid., pp. 738-39.

4. Ibid., p. 738.

Meanwhile, the Bengal Sultan with his new friend, Minhaj-us-Siraj, the noted historian whom he met at the door of Kara,[1] returned at Lakhnawati on the 17th of Zi-hijjah of 640 A.H. (7th June, 1243 A.D.) and received the royal envoy and the imperial Khilat and other presents, with great pomp and grandeur on 11th of Rabi-ul-awwal, 641 A.H. (29th August, 1243 A.D.).

But this was the last glorious episode of his reign. He came back to Lakhnawati only to see the dying out of his dream of the establishment of an East Indian Sultanate. In the meantime, Raja Narasimhadeva-I, the Rai of Jajnagar began molesting the frontiers of Lakhnawati in the year 641 A.H. (1243 A.D.). Tughral Tughan, with a large army, marched into the frontiers of Orissa and in the encounter, which took place at Katasin, the "Muslims sustained an overthrow, and a great number of those holy warriors attained martyrdom" on 7th of Ziqadah, 641 A.H. (17th April, 1244 A.D.) informs Minhaj, who also joined "this holy war."[2]

1. Ibid., p. 738.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 738.

Tughral Tughan, somehow, came back to Lakhnawati and again sent Sharf-ul-Mulk al Ashari to the Delhi Court "to solicit assistance"[1] to fight out the Oriya army. The Delhi Sultan, without any hesitation, immediately commissioned Malik Qamruddin Qiran Tamar Khan, the Governor of Awadh, to march at once "for exterminating the infidels of Jajnagar." Meanwhile the Oriya army followed up the success, took the offensive and captured Lakhnor. Fakhr-ul-Mulk Karimuddin Laghiri, the Muqta of Lakhnor and a large number of Muslims were put to the sword and the invading army reached the gates of Lakhnawati on 13th Shawwal, 642 A.H. (14th March, 1245 A.D.).[2] But the very next day messengers brought the news that the 'army of Hindustan' was coming from Delhi and the Oriya army withdrew from the neighbourhood of the Bengal capital and retreated.[3]

Now, the last stage, the tragedy of the career of Tughral Tughan began. Malik Qamruddin Qiran Tamar Khan, who was despatched by the Delhi Sultan "to

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 738-39.

2. Ibid., p. 379.

3. Ibid., p. 739.

retrieve the prestige of Muslim arms and exterminate the infidels,"[1] challenged the authority of Tughral Tughan Khan. Here it is to be noted that when Tughan Khan was the 'amir-i-akhar' at Delhi, Iltutmish, being satisfied with the services of Tamar Khan, "during the expedition to Chandwal", had appointed him as the 'naib-i-amir-i-akhar', which generated mutual intense hatred between them. The latter, however, beseiged the Muslim capital of Bengal and a battle was fought between them. The Bengal king was forced to take shelter within the city of Lakhnawati on the 5th of the month Zil-Hijjah, 642 A.H. (4th May, 1245 A.D.).[2]

Minhaj-usSiraj was requested by Tughral Tughan to negotiate the terms of peace with Tamar Khan, the Governor of Awadh.[3] While the two rulers of Eastern India was fighting each other, the Delhi Sultan remained a silent onlooker as if he had nothing to do to stop this sort of anti-state activities of the subordinate officers.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 740.

2. Ibid., p. 740.

3. Ibid., pp. 740-41.

Both the governors were eager to be the master of Eastern India and hence this struggle. Through the good offices of Minhaj, however, a peace was made and it was decided that Tughral Tughan would hand over the Government of Lakhnawati to Tamar Khan and leave Bengal for Delhi with "his treasure, his elephants and followers." The Bengal Sultan reached Delhi on the 14th Safar, 643 A.H. (11th July, 1245 A.D.), but he had to wait there for another two years for a suitable accommodation. When Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud ascended the throne in Delhi, Tughral Tughan was appointed as the Feudatory of Awadh.[1] But he entered Awadh only to die on the last day of the month of Shawwal, 644 A.H. (9th March, 1247 A.D.),[2] and thus a king died, who "was adorned with all sorts of humanity and sagacity, and graced with many virtues and noble qualities; and in liberality, generousity and power of winning men's hearts, he had no equal."[3]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 741.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, Pp. 244-46.

3. Ibid.

Malik Qamruddin Qiran Tamar Khan[1] a native of Qipchak and purchased by Sultan Iltutmish, seized the Government of Lakhnawati from Tughral Tughan in 642 A.H. (1245 A.D.). As a naib Amir-i-Akhur he performed good service and was promoted to the office of Amir-i-Akhur. During the reign of Sultan Raziyah he became the Feudatory of Kanauj, from where he was despatched by the Sultan into the Gwalior territory and Malwa, where he was successful. Subsequently, the fief of Kara was entrusted to him. As the fief-holder of Kara, he undertook many expeditions against the neighbouring Hindu regions and proved himself a successful general. When Malik Nasrutuddin Tayasi, the feudatory of Awadh died, he was appointed by Sultan Raziyah in the office. As the Feudatory of Awadh Tamar Khan penetrated as far as Tirhut and also plundered the territory of Bhatighor on several occasions and extorted tribute. But as a usurper in Bengal, Tamar Khan confined himself to rebellious activities at Lakhnawati "for a period of two years."[2] Minhaj, perhaps, was not happy with his

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 742-44.

2. Ibid., p. 744.

activities at Lakhnawati. Probably Tamar Khan did not care to maintain any relations with the Delhi Sultans — Alauddin Masud Shah and Nasiruddin Mahmud, the patron of the contemporary historian and hence Minhaj does not mention anything about Tamar Khan's activities at Lakhnawati. Tamar Khan died on the very same day at Lakhnawati, when Tughan died at Awadh.[1]

On the death of Malik Tamar Kan, the Delhi court granted the governorship of Bengal and Bihar to Malik Jalaluddin Masud Jani,[2] son of Alauddin Masud Jani. The new Governor took the title of 'Malik-ush-Shark' and styled himself as 'Shah'. Though he adorned himself with these high-sounding titles, he tried to maintain his good relations with the Delhi Sultan. He ruled for

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin, p.78. Salim says that Tamar Khan ruled for ten years and died in 655 A.H. (1257 A.D.).

2. Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1913-14, pp. 19-22. Cunningham: Reports, XV, pp.45 and 171. The viceroyalty of Jalaluddin Masud Shah Jani is affirmed by an inscription at Gangarampur in Dinajpur District, dated 647 A.H. He is obviously identical with Qulich Khan Masud Jani, son of Alauddin Jani, also mentioned as one of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud's maliks and described as the Malik of Lakhnawati and Karah (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 206).

a period of four years and was succeeded by Malik Ikhtyaruddin Yuzbaki-Tughril in 650 A.H. (1252 A.D.).

Malik Ikhtyaruddin Yuzbak,[1] a Qipchak Turk, had began his career as a slave of Sultan Iltutmish. Yuzbak was in charge of the office of 'Naib Chasnigir' during the investment of the fortress of Gwalior. When Sultan Ruknuddin Firoz came to the throne, the office of 'Amir-i-Majlis' was entrusted to him. Subsequently, the 'Shahnagi' of the elephants was assigned to him. During this reign, he became "especially distinguished by the Sultan's intimacy and favour."[2] But Yuzbak, was erratic and disloyal by nature, took a leading part in the massacre of the Tazik officers in the neighbourhood of Mansurpur and Tarain, which complicated the situation at the Delhi court. Afterwards he joined the rebels, who deposed Firoz Shah and exalted Raziyah to the throne. Now he was made Amir-i-Akhur, but after three years, he again raised his arms against Sultan Raziyah. He became favourite of Sultan Muizuddin Bahram Shah, who was, very soon forced to throw Yuzbak into prison. With the rise of Alauddin

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 761-766.

2. Ibid., p. 761.

Masud Shah, he was set free. The Sultan appointed him to Tabarhindh and subsequently Lahore was made his fief. But very soon "a feud arose between him and Malik Nasiruddin Mahammad of Bindar"[1] and he tried to build up a plot against the Delhi Sultan. Hence he was again imprisoned but due to the intervention of Ulugh Khan i Muazzam, he was released. Balban brought him to Delhi and due to his recommendation he was entrusted with fief of Kanauj. But he again began to act in a contumacious manner, and Malik Qutbuddin Husain was despatched from the capital against him,[2] who reduced him "to duty and obedience"[3] and brought him back to the capital city.

After some time Awadh was assigned to him, but Yuzbak being dissatisfied with this new assignment came back to Delhi. Through the patronage of Balban, the territory of Lakhnawati was now made over to him.[4]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 762.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

After the acceptance of the viceroyalty of Lakhnawati, Yuzbak took steps to consolidate his position and authority in Varendra. Next he led his army against the king of Jajnagar to avenge the disgrace which the Muslim arms sustained in the year 641 A.H. (1243 A.D.). During this campaign Yuzbak fought three indecisive battles.[1] The following year Malik Yuzbak asked assistance from the court of Delhi, which at the time plunged itself into a serious 'ministerial revolution.' The Bengal army, however, marched into the territory of Umardan and "reached the Rai's capital. The Rai of that place retired before Malik Yuzbak, and the whole of the Rai's family, dependents, and followers, and his wealth, and elephants, fell into hands of the Musalman forces."[2]

Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbak, on returning to Lakhnawati raised the standard of rebellion and "assumed

1. In the first battle the Jajnagar leader, who was a son-in-law and feudatory of Raja Narasimhadeva I, proved his valour and fought, but was defeated. Again another time, Malik Tughral Yuzbak fought an engagement with the Rai of Jajnagar, who again came out victorious. On the third occasion, Malik Yuzbak sustained a slight reverse. (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.763).

2. Ibid., p. 763.

three canopies of state red, black and white."[1] The confusing state of affairs in Delhi fired his ambition and he hoisted the flag against Delhi, and thus Bengal regained its traditional independence. A silver coin from the mint of Lakhnawati was issued to commemorate the conquests of Umardan in the month of Ramzan, 653 A.H. (June, 1255 A.D.). He took the title "Sultan Mughis al-duniya waal-din Abul Muzaffar Yuzbak-al Sultan."[2] This lengthy and high-sounding title is a definite proof of his independent and over-ambitious mind, which was also reflected in the next project of the Bengal king. Minhaj says that the citizens of Lakhnawati, Hindus and Muslims, disapproved of their defiance of the imperial authority by their ruler. But Yuzbak paid no heed to their objection. Of course, this statement of Minhaj does not find corroboration in other sources.

1. This is explained "as a token of his sovereignty over the three provinces of Lakhnawati, Bihar and Oudh." (vide History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.52). But according to Minhaj-us-Siraj, this incident took place before the occupation of Awadh (Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p.763).

2. Vide, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1881, p.61, No.11 & 12, Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, ii, p.146, No.61, History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.52.

The Bengal King now decided to extend the boundary of his kingdom to fulfil his dream of the establishment of an 'Independent Sultanate of Gaur' comprising entire Eastern India. He led his army towards Awadh, entered the city, and "directed that the 'Khutba' should be read for him" under the title of Mughisuddin."[1]

After couple of weeks Sultan Mughisuddin came back to Lakhnawati. Minhaj did not like these activities of the Bengal Sultan and declared, "this evil deed overtook him and he was overthrown root and branch."[2] But the next project of Sultan Mughisuddin does not corroborate the above opinion of the Delhi chronicler. Possibly Minhaj was not happy with Sultan Mughisuddin, who raised the flag of independence against his patron Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud.

Sultan Mughisuddin now decided to conquer the kingdom of Kamrup. The Rai of Kamrup was not in a position to resist the onslaught and the capital was evacuated. Yuzbak captured the city and acquired the

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 263.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 263.

Rai's treasures. The Raja sent an envoy promising a heavy yearly tribute. He also agreed to maintain the coinage and read 'Khutba' in the name of Sultan Mughisuddin. But the Bengal king was not in favour of any compromise, because he was eager to conquer and annex the kingdom of Kamrup completely. The Raja of Kamrup, who took refuge with his army in the neighbouring jungle, adopted a new strategy. He asked the soldiers and subjects to offer their show of allegiance to Sultan Mughisuddin, who neglected to store up grain and fodder for the rainy season. The surplus stock of food-stuff in the meantime, was purchased by the local merchants and sent them to distant places by the direction of the Raja, which failed to rouse any suspicion of the invading army. As soon as the monsoon set in, the Raja and his subjects, according to the plan, rose in arms. They cut off supplies to the city, seized the plains and opened all the river-dams. The Bengal army, consequently, decided to retreat. They found a guide to lead them through a short-cut route by the foot of the hills. But here too the Kamrup army blocked their movement and being assailed on all sides the Bengal army was seized by panic. The Sultan, riding an elephant, was fighting bravely till he was mortally wounded on the breast by an arrow. The Bengal army was

forced to surrender and the Sultan with his family and dependants were captured. The Sultan who was brought before the Raja, asked for a last favour — to have a look at his son, which was granted and the Sultan of Bengal died.[1] Thus came to an end the career of a brave and independent Sultan of Lakhnawati, who challenged the supremacy of Delhi Sultan and succeeded in extending his empire up to the frontier of Awadh. Hence the pen of the Delhi court chronicler, Minhaj was not kind to him, who says, "Rashness and imperiousness were implanted in his nature and constitution,"[2] but "the Muslim power of Lakhnawati owed much to the vigour and earnest effort of Yuzbak, who annexed permanently the whole of Rarh as far as the northern boundary of the districts of modern Midnapur and Bankura" which "proved in the subsequent period the base of operations of Muslim arms against the decaying Sena kingdom of Eastern and South Bengal."[3]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, pp. 263-65.

2. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 762.

3. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, p. 54.

After the sad demise of Sultan Mughisuddin, "on the 18th of Zi-kadah, the last month 656 A.H., the king-dom of Lakhnawati was conferred upon Malik Qutlugh Khan, Jalaluddin Masud Shah, son of late Malik Aleuddin Jani."[1] He, sent presents, and acknowledged the suzerainty of Sultan Nasiruddin and minted coins at Lakhnawati in the name of the Delhi Sultan.[2] But Malik Masud Jani could not maintain his authority over Lakhnawati for a long time. His son-in-law, Malik Izzuddin Balban-i-Yuzbaki seized the throne of Bengal from him and sent a huge tribute to Delhi to get the recognition of the Delhi Sultan. Minhaj writes, that "On Wednesday, the 4th of the month of Jamadi-ul-Akhir, 657 A.H. treasures, valuables and elegancies to a large amount, with two elephants, reached the sublime threshold from the Lakhnawati territory, and Uhugh Khan i Azam, in return for such a commendable assiduity, exerted interest, on behalf of Malik Izzuddin Balbani-i-Yuzbaki, who was the sendor of those elephants and property; and the investi-ture of the fief of Lakhnawati was bestowed upon him

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, pp. 225-26.

2. Ibid.

by his majesty, and that territory was confirmed on him, and a robe of honour and other distinctions were transmitted to him."[1]

We know very little about the early career of Malik Izzuddin Balban-i-Yuzbaki from the pages of Tabqat-i-Nasiri. He began his career as a naib amiral and held the posts of naib Amir-i-Majlis and Naib Amir-i-Hajib. Malik Izzuddin Yuzbaki forcibly seized the 'takht' of Lakhnawati from the hands of his father-in-law without any commission or perhaps even knowledge of the pious Sultan of Delhi.[2] He received the formal recognition from the Delhi Sultan as the Governor of the kingdom of Lakhnawati, inscribed the name of Sultan Nasiruddin in his coins and ruled for a very short time "in virtual independence". Having been recognised by the Sultan of Delhi, Yuzbak sent two elephants, valuable property, and precious things to a large amount to the court of Delhi.

The only important event, narrated by Minhaj,[3]

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, pp. 226 and 313.
2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.55.
3. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Text, p. 267.

during his rule was an invasion of 'Bang' in 657 A.H. (1259 A.D.) which became fatal to his career and life. Malik Izzuddin Balban-i-Yuzbaki, Minhaj writes that the Muqti of Lakhnawati had proceeded to Bang and the city was denuded of troops. Malik Arslan Khan, i-Sinjar, the Governor of Kara, taking advantage of this undefended condition of the Bengal capital, marched towards the territory of Lakhnawati in the beginning of 657 A.H. (1259 A.D.). When he reached the gate of the city of Lakhnawati the inhabitants of the city took refuge within the walls and for three days the untrained masses fought with the invading army but could not withstand the onslaught. The unarmed and untrained Hindu and Muslim citizens of the city Lakhnawati heroeially defended their country for three days against the invader. This shows that not only the ruler but the common citizens were also conscious about their independent position. However, they were ultimately defeated by the invading army. At the end of that time Arslan Khan-i-Sanjar occupied the city and gave orders to sack it. The property, cattle and Musalman captives that fell into the hands of his followers was very great. For three days, the plunder and rapine continued unabated. When Malik Izzuddin Balbak-i-Yuzbaki, became acquainted with

the misfortune, returned from 'Bang' and an engagement took place between the two fief-holders. Arslan Khan-i-Sanjar gained the upper hand, the Bengal ruler fell a captive and lost his life.

Malik Tajuddin Arslan Khan, i-Sanjar,[1] the new usurper was a slave of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, who had purchased him from Ikhtyarul Mulk Abu Bakr, the Habsh. Since thenhe had served the royal court of Delhi on different capacities. Sultan Iltutmish appointed him as the 'Janahdar' and in that office he served till the termination of Sultan Rukhnuddin Firoj's reign. During the reign of Sultan Raziyah, he became 'Chashnigir' and after some time he obtained the fief of Balaram. In the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, he became the fief-holder of Bhianah. Subsequently, after some years Arslan Khan was entrusted with the office of Wakil-i-Dar. In the month of Zil-Hijjah, 651 (November, 1253 A.D.) Tabarhindh was made over to his charge. After that, he attached himself to the service of the discharged Khan-i-Muazzam, the Ulugh Khan-i-Azam and along with him came

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, pp. 766-70.

to Delhi, where he received honour. He again returned to Tabarhindh. Here, he faced an onslaught of Malik Sher Khan, the latter was forced to retire from the field. Awadh was now entrusted to the charge of Arslan Khan, where, on several occasions, he had to fight out the party of Qutlugh Khan, the son of Alauddin Jani and compelled them to disperse.

After this success, a slight change-antagonistic to the imperial court — manifested in the activities of Tajuddin Arslan Khan-i-Sanjar. The Delhi army had to move towards Awadh and Kara for the purpose of suppression of his designs. Arslan Khan despatched confidential persons at Delhi to seek safety for himself. He along with Qutlugh Khan Jalaluddin Masud Jani presented themselves before the royal court and paid their supplication, which was graciously complied with.

After he had remained in attendance at the royal court for some time, the city of Kara was assigned to him as a fief in 657 A.H. (1259 A.D.). In the beginning of the same year he led an army from Kara with the intention of pillaging the country of Malwa and Kalinjar, but after he had advanced some stages, he turned aside and marched towards the territory of Lakhnawati which was forcibly

seized by him. Izzuddin Balban-i-Yazbaki the ruler of Lakhnawati was defeated and killed[1] and Tajuddin Arslan khan-i-Sanjar became the ruler of the territories of the entire region between Lakhnawati and Kara.

No contemporary record or coin throws any light on the reign of Arslan Khan in Bengal and hence nothing can be said about his relations with the court of Delhi. The Barahdari inscription[2] of Bihar warrants us in surmising correctly that Tajuddin Arslan Khan held independent sway over Bihar and Lakhnawati under the title of Sultan, that he died in the night of Sunday, the 18th Jamada 1, 663 A.H. (8th March, 1265 A.D.) and he was succeeded by his son Tatar Khan, in whose time a tomb was built over the remains of this Sultan two years after his death. A chronicle, Riyaz-us-Salatin,[3] written much later, also informs that Malik Tajuddin Arslan Khan ruled independently over Lakhnawati and Bihar with the title of Sultan and died in 663 A.H. (1265 A.D.).

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Raverty, p. 770, f.n. 9.

2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.56, f.n. 2.

3. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 74.

The history of the next few years is obscure because of the absence of any contemporary written chronicle. Tatar Khan, who was famous for his bravery, liberality, heroism and honesty[1] succeeded his father, Arslan Khan peacefully. There is no evidence which can prove that he paid allegiance to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud of Delhi. Both the father and the son enjoyed independence during the rule of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud. But in the first year of the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban, sixty three elephants were sent by Tatar Khan, son of Arslan Khan from Lakhnawati to Delhi, which greatly pleased the people, and was the occasion of great public rejoicing.[2] The Bengal envoy was accorded a royal reception worthy of embassies from Iran or Turan. This, however, does not mean that Tatar Khan accepted the suzerainty of Delhi, rather it was a diplomatic measure of the Bengal ruler, who tried to keep the Delhi lord in good humour. The goodwill expressed by Tatar Khan was

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin, A. Salam, p. 78.

2. Tarikh-i-Firozshahi, Text, Barani, p.53; Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, p. 40; Riyaz-us-Salatin, A. Salam, p.78; Tarikh-i-Firozshahi, vide Elliot and Dowson, Vol.III, p. 103.

reciprocated by the Delhi Sultan, who sent valuable gifts to Lakhnawati.

Muhammad Tatar Khan, probably, died two years after the accession of Balban to the Delhi throne.[1] Sher khan who succeeded Tatar Khan was a member of the family of Tajuddin Arslan Khan and "not a governor sentfrom Delhi, restored the name of Balban on the coinage of Lakhnawati in 667 A.H. or a year earlier."[2] Thus Lakhnawati again became a province of the Delhi Empire, after "about a decade of independent rule under the dynasty of Tajuddin Arslan Khan."[3] Perhaps Sher Khan ruled over Bengal for not more than four years.

Yahya[4] says that after the death of Sher Khan, Amin Khan, the Governor of Awadh, was assigned Lakhnawati

1. Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Ranking, Vol.I, p.185. According to Riyuz-us-Salatin, he was removed from his office by an order of Sultan Balban (Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 75.)

2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.57.

3. Ibid., p. 58.

4. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, p. 40.

and Tughral was made his naib or deputy. If we are to rely upon the statement of Yahya then it may be assumed that Balban devised this new policy to keep Bengal under permanent subjection through the policy of 'check and balance'. The Delhi Sultan appointed the deputy governor to put a check on the ambition of the governor of Lakhnawati, "a class always prone to rebellion."[1] If Yahya is to be believed then, this was the only instance of the appointment of a Deputy Governor to Bengal by the Sultan of Delhi. Barani says that Tughral was appointed straightway the sole Governor of Lakhnawati. Because Tughral at the time of his appointment was an untried, brave and did not yet then fill any post of importance and responsibility. Hence it will be reasonable to ascribe to the statement of Yahya that Tughral was appointed Deputy Governor.[2]

But this policy of Delhi also did not work well. Tughral, although a Turkish slave was "a very active, bold, courageous and generous man."[3] He was also self-willed

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.58.

2. Ibid., p. 58.

3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, vide Elliot and Dowson, Vol. III, p. 112.

and daring; "ambition had long laid its egg"[1] in his head. Tughral as the deputy governor, tried to keep the Governor in good humour on the one hand, and on the other, took up the task of consolidation of his power and position and thereafter pursued the policy of expansion of the kingdom of Lakhnawati. He succeeded in extending Lakhnawati's control over the modern districts of Faridpur and Dacca, and annexed the river tracts on both the sides of the river Padma as far as Loricol, known as Arsah-i-Bangala.[2] Tughral tried to establish friendly power in Tippera and thus succeeded in securing a hold over Eastern part of Bengal. After establishing his authority over Rarh region, he attacked Jajnagar and carried off great spoil in valuables and elephants. These successes made Tughral arrogant and defiant. He became headless of royal revenge and chastisement.[3] He appropriated himself the treasures

1. Ibid., p. 113.

2. It is a political unit within the bigger geographical unit known as 'Diyar-i-Bangala' (Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 93).

3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp. 96-97.

and elephants which he had captured at Jajnagar; and did not send any part of the spoils to Delhi on the supposition that Sultan Balban was too old and too much preoccupied with the Mongol menace to chastise him. Moreover he was perhaps encouraged to do so by the rumours that the old Sultan had died at Lahore. Tughral naturally thought himself absolved from allegiance to Delhi. Yahya writes, after his return from North West Frontier Balban wrote to Tughral asking him to celebrate the occasion of Sultan's recovery from illness in a befitting manner.[1] But Tughral had gone meanwhile too far to retrace.. Tughral "assumed royal insignia, and took the title of Sultan Mughisuddin, which title was used in the 'Khutba' and on his coins."[2] According to Yahya,[3] rumours spread in Bengal about the death of Sultan Balban, and Tughral turned out Amin-Khan and assumed royalty. He mobilised his army and marched upon Bihar. He was profuse in his

1. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, pp. 30-31.

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Barani, pp. 82-83.

3. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, pp. 40-42; Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Eng. tr., Vol. I, p. 186; Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Barani, p. 83.

liberality and hence the army and the citizens lost all fear of Delhi and joined heart and soul with Tughral. Tughral became very popular with both his Hindu and Muslim subjects, for he tried to reassert Bengal's indepedence and sovereignty. Barani writes that the people of the city (of Delhi) who had been there and also the inhabitants of that place (Lakhnauti) became very friendly to him. The troops and citizens having shaken off all of the Balbani chastisement, joined Tughral heart and soul.

When the report of the rebellious activities of Tughral reached Delhi, Balban became furious. Such was the dimension of Balban's anger that he lost his sleep and appetite as Barani says. He was so much engrossed with the rebellious activities of the cherished "Banda" that no other business of the empire received any attention from him. The dimension of the rebellion was such that after repeated invasions and failures Sultan Balban himself had to come to Bengal and succeeded in suppressing the fire of rebellion.

At first the Delhi Sultan despatched Malik Aitigin Mui-daraz, known as Amin Khan, the Governor of Awadh, with a large army to Lakhnawati to suppress the

revolt.[1] Along with Amin Khan were sent Tamar Khan Shamsi, Malik Tajuddin son of Qutbugh Khan Shamsi, and a number of other experienced Maliks and officers of Hindustan. Tughral challenged the Delhi Commander as soon as the latter with the combined forces of Hindustan crossed the Sarju and marched towards Lakhnawati, and he ignominiously defeated him.[2] The troops of Delhi ran away but the victorious Bengal army pursued and many of the Delhi troopers deserted Amin Khan and joined Tughral. Barani writes that "on its retreat the Delhi army was cruelly harassed and plundered by the Hindus.[3] This statement of Barani proves that Tughral became a 'national king' of Bengal and had received the support

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 84. Firishta informs that Amin Khan on this occasion was appointed as the Governor of Lakhnawati (Tarikh-i-Ferishta, Text, Vol.I, p.79). According to Yahya, Malik Turmati, the Governor of Awadh, was sent against Tughral. (Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, pp. 40-42); Isami also names the General as Turmati (Futuh-u-Salatin, p.161).

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 84.

3. Ibid.

and assistance from all sections of the people to fight out the onslaught of Delhi. This was a national struggle of the people of Bengal and Sultan Balban "was now at war not with an individual rebel" but with a nation, "and this accounts for the repeated failures of the imperial armies against Bengal and the Sultan's own difficulties in subduing Tughral."[1] The news of this disastrous defeat enraged Sultan Balban and his shame increased a hundred fold. He ordered Amin Khan to be hanged over the gate of Awadh for his failure.[2] "This condign punishment", writes Barani, "excited a strong feeling of opposition among the wise men of the day, who looked upon it as a token that the reign of Balban was drawing to an end."[3]

Next year the Sultan sent another expedition against Bengal under one of his chosen officers, named Bahadur.[4] The defeat of Amin Khan had made Sultan

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.61.

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 84.

3. Ibid.

4. Futuh-us-Salatin, Text, Isami, pp. 165-66. According to Yahya, Mir of Awadh, Malik Shihabuddin was sent against Tughral. (Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, pp. 40-42).

contd ... P/134.

Mughisuddin bolder, and his power and strength had greatly increased. He boldly faced the second challenge of Delhi and totally routed the imperial army. Many of this army also deserted to Bengal king. The news of this second defeat caused great concern to Balban, who, at last, tried to assess the proper dimension of the Bengal Rebellion. He at last resolved to march in person to deal with Tughral to restore the lost prestige and authority of Delhi.[1] Balban ordered the construction of a large fleet on the Ganges and the Jamuna. He divided the districts of Samana and Sunam under the charge of the chiefs and troops of these districts. Malik Sonj, the 'sar-jander' was appointed the 'naib' of Samana and commander of its forces. The Sultan wrote to prince Muhammad, the Governor of Multan, to be watchful and vigilant in the frontier against the Mongols. Malik-ul-Umara Fakhruddin, the Kotwal of Delhi, was appointed to act as the 'naib-i-ghilat' of the Sultan at Delhi, and

According to A.B.M. Habibullah, three expeditions — the first under Amin Khan, the second under Tirmiti andthe third under Shahabuddin were sent against Tughral before the Sultan himself took the charge to punish the rebel. (The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India, pp. 172-73).

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 86.

during his absence the Kotwal was asked to look after the whole business of the state and to give necessary instructions to the various officials of the kingdom without writing for imperial sanction. Overwhelmed with shame and anger, and his life embittered by the repeated failures of his amirs, the Sultan thus fully prepared himself and resolved to pursue the rebel Tughral and never turn back until he had exacted vengeance. Bughra Khan, the youngest son, was directed to collect his own forces and to follow in the rear of the imperial army.

Balban left Delhi under the pretence of a hunting excursion, moved towards Samana and Sunam, wherefrom proceeding into the Doab crossed the Ganges. Having collected all the forces of neighbourhood took the course to Lakhnawati.[1] He entered Awadh and ordered a general levy and shortly two lakhs of men of all classes were enrolled. The fleet was also further strengthened and it moved along with the imperial forces towards Lakhnawati. The rainy season meanwhile began and the progress of the imperial army was delayed by ten or twelve days because it had to stop at various places.

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Barani, p. 86.

Meantime, Tughral, having received the intelligence of the movement of the imperial army, decided to avoid any direct confrontation with it. He left Lakhnawati with treasure and elephants, a picked body of troops, his officers, relations, and adherents, with their wives and children. He 'took the road to Jajnagar,[1] and halted at a dry place, one day's journey from Lakhnawati. The people, who accompanied him, were given the impression that as soon as he should hear of the Sultan's departure they would plunder Jajnagar, and return rich and safe to Lakhnawati.

Sultan Balban reached Lakhnawati and stayed there several days to reorganise his army. He conferred 'shahnagi' of Lakhnawati upon Sipahsalar Husamuddin, who was the Wakildar of Malik Barbek Bektars and maternal grandfather of Barani, with instructions to pass on the reports received from Delhi to the Sultan three or four times every week. Balban set off with all possible speed towards Jajnagar in pursuit of Tughral and in a few days

1. Haji Dabir, III, p.967; Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, p.42, states that Tughral fled to Narkilah. But Barani says Hajinagar (Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 86).

arrived at Sonargaon where a meeting took place between the Delhi Sultan and Dhanuj Rai and the latter agreed to guard the water routes against the escape of Tughral.

The determination of Sultan Balban to crush the rebellion is evident from the statement of Barani, who writes, "the Sultan many times publicly declared that he would never give up the pursuit of the rebel. They were playing for half the kingdom of Delhi; and if Tughral took to the water he would pursue him, and he would never return to Delhi; or even mention it, until the blood of the rebel and his followers had been poured out. The people of the army well knew the fierce temper and implacable resolution of the Sultan. They despaired of ever returning and many of them drew up their wills and sent them to their homes."[1]

The imperial army through continuous march covered about seventy kos but failed to trace the army of Tughral Khan, who had probably pursued a different route. The Sultan despatched Malik Barbak Bektars, at the head of seven or eight thousand horse, who advanced ten or

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, vide Elliot and Dowson, Vol. III, p. 117.

twelve kos ahead of the main army. Scouts were sent out in all directions everyday before the advance party to find out the whereabouts of Tughral. One day a party of scouts under Malik Muhammad Sherandaz, the chief of Kol came into contact with a party of corn-dealers, who were returning home after completing their dealings with Tughral. They were seized and Malik Sherandaz ordered two of them to be beheaded, which terrified the rest so much that the party of corn-dealers disclosed that Tughral was encamped at less than half a 'farsang' distance, near a stone-built reservoir, and intended next day to enter the territory of Jajnagar. This incident demonstrates the attitude of the common people towards the government at Lakhnawati and its Sultan. Only being terrified the corn-dealers were forced to disclose the whereabouts of Tughral. Malik Sherandaz communicated this information to Malik Barbak Bektars without any delay and urged his advance. But the party of scouts did not wait for the arrival of Bektars and succeeded in tracing the tents of Tughral near a 'band' with all his force encamped around.

Tughral's army seemed secure and free from apprehension; the elephants, the horses and cattle were grazing — and everywhere a sense of security prevailed. Sherandaz

and his comrades without any delay drew their swords, and shouting the name of Tughral, dashed into camp, while the soldiers of Tughral were eithter washing their clothes or were drinking and singing. Tughral was terrified with the surprise attack and mounted a horse without a saddle and made off to a nearly river. Malik Muqaddar and another officer, named Ali, pursued Tughral and when the latter reached the river, Ali drew an arrow at him and brought him down. Malik Muqaddar instantly got down from his horse, cut off Tughral's head and threw his body into river. As the officers of Tughral were searching for their master on every side, Muqaddar, concealed his head, went to river to wash his hands. Just then Malik Barbak Bektars arrived with his army and the forces of Tughral were dispersed. Muqaddar and Ali placed the head of Tughral before Malik Barbak, who immediately sent the news of victory to the Sultan. The sons and daughters of Tughral, his officers, companions and attendants all fell into the hands of the victors, who obtained such a large amount of booty in money, goods, arms, slaves and handmaids, as to suffice them and their children for many years. Two and three thousand men and women were taken prisoners.

Malik Barbak returned with the booty and prisoners in the royal camp. Malik Muqaddar reported all the

particulars of the victory to the Sultan, who bestowed robes and rewards upon all the men of the advance party, according to their rank and raised their position. Ali was bestowed with the title of "Tughral Kush" the Slayer of Tughral, and equal inams were given to him and Malik Muqaddar.

Balban came back to Lakhnawati and there ordered that gibbets should be erected along both sides of the main 'bazar', which was more than a 'Kos' in length, and all the sons and sons-in-laws, all men who had served him or borne arms for him were impaled upon them. The punishment went on during the two or three days that the Sultan remained at Lakhnawati. "I have heard from several old men" writes Barani, "that such punishment as was inflicted on Lakhnawati had never been heard of in Delhi, and no one could remember anything like it in Hindustan."[1] A number of prisoners who belonged to Delhi and its neighbourhood were kept in fetters for punishment at Delhi.

Balban assigned Lakhnawati to his younger son, Bughra Khan and granted him a canopy and other royal insignia. He himself also appointed other officials and

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp. 91-92.

'iktadars'. All the spoils of Tughral Khan, excepting the elephants and gold which he took with him to Delhi, were given to Bughra Khan, who was also asked to take an oath that he would conquer 'diyar-i-Bangala' and establish his own authority therein firmly, and that he would not hold convivial parties, nor indulge in wine and dissipation. The Sultan asked "Mahmud, what didst thou see ?". He repeated the question thrice and then continued, "Remember, my son, what amount of blood I have drunk in subduing iqlim-i-Lakhnawati and Arsah-i-Bangala, and for the sake of the durability of this country, I have acted like a Pharaoh and hanged people from gallows. If ever designing and evil-minded persons should incite you to waver in your allegiance to Delhi, and to throw off its authority, then remember the vengeance which you have seen in the bazar."[1]

The Delhi army and the Sultan left Bengal and reached Delhi probably in the month of June, 1282 A.D. after an absence of three years. Balban created such a condition in Bengal that could ensure Delhi's suzerainty over the region. But within four years the Sultan

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 93.

realised that he had laboured in vain to subject Bengal permanently to the imperial sway of Delhi. Bughra Khan's assignment itself facilitated the restoration of Bengal's independence and establishment of an independent dynasty in the region.

Prince Mahmud Bughra Khan ruled over Bengal for about six years (1281-87) till his father's death. He maintained his authority over the principality of Lakhnawati with the help, assistance and advice of the two nobles each bearing the same name Firuz, — one a seasoned Khalji civil officer of sound judgement and mature understanding and the other an experienced and valliant warrior from Koh-Jud.

On the death of Prince Muhammad, the eldest son of Balban and also the heir-apparent to the throne of Delhi the Sultan was rudely shocked and very soon grew weak and fell ill. He summoned his second son Prince Mahmud Bughra Khan from Lakhnawati and asked him to be present at the imperial court. The Sultain said to Bughra Khan that his grandsons Kai Khusrau and Kaiqubad were young and inexperiencedand unfit to govern the kingdom. Unless Bughra was prepared to take up the reaesponsibility of the throne of Delhi, it would again become a 'bacha-bazi' i.e., a

child's toy as it had been under the successors of Shamsuddin Iltutmish. But Bughra Khan paid no heed to the advice of Sultan Balban. He found in Bengal a safe and prosperous region to fulfil his mission of life. He knew that the throne of Delhi was not a bed of roses, but it was easier to make himself a full-fledged sovereign of the kingdom of Bengal. Though Balban argued that one who would mount the throne of Delhi would be able to make Lakhnawati a subordinate kingdom. But Bughra Khan saw that Balban took six months or more in subjugating the rebellion of Tughral Khan. Hence he decided to forego his claims on Delhi. He had been by the side of his ailing father for two or three months and making the so-called recovery of the Sultan an excuse, Bughra Khan left Delhi for Lakhnawati without having any previous permission of the Sultan.

Balban died after a few months in 686 A.H. (July, 1287 A.D.) and before his death nominated his grandson Kai Khusrau, the son of Prince Muhammad. But the wazir Nizamuddin set aside the claim of Kai Khusrau and raised Kaiqubad, the eldest son of Bughra Khan to the throne of Delhi.

Bughra Khan observed ceremonial mourining[1] for

1. Futuh-us-Salatin, Text, Isami, p. 183.

a week at Lakhnawati and then assumed the title of Sultan Nasiruddin, struck coins and caused the Khutba to be read in his own name.[1] Bengal regained its independence and sovereignty under Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Bughra Khan and thus the dream of the Delhi authorities to maintain their suzerainty over Bengal was again set to naught. Barani refers to the cordial relations maintained between the two sovereign authorities and writes that "correspondence was kept up between the father and son, and messengers were constantly passing, carrying presents from one to the other."[2]

Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Bughra Khan was informed of Kaiqubad's devotion to pleasure and the evil designs of Malik Nizamuddin. The Bengal Sultan wrote letters of advice and caution to his son, but Kaiqubad paid no heed to them. So after two years of reign, "Bughra Khan", informed Barani, "resolved to go and see him personally and wrote a letter to Kaiqubad announcing his desire. This letter awakened Kaiqubad's emotion and several

1. Tarik-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p.139; Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, p. 54.

2. Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 139.

letters passed between the father and the son. It was at last decided that the Sultan would go to Awadh and his father should come from Lakhnawati and meet him on the bank of river Sarju. The Sultan's intention was to proceed unceremoniously to the Sarju, but due to his minister's ulterior design, he had to set out in all regal state, with a suitable army and pitched his royal camp on the bank of the Sarju. When Bughra Khan was informed that the Sultan had brought a large army, he understood that Nizamuddin, the minister had instilled doubt about his sincerity into the heart of his son. The Bengal king, however, set forth from Lakhnawati with an army and elephants and arrived at the Sarju, where the two armies encamped on opposite sides of the river, but within the sight of each other. For two or three days officers passed from both sides, carrying messages between father and son and at last the detailed programme of the interview was settled. Bughra Khan agreed to cross the river and fulfill all the requirements of ceremonial etiquette to be shown to the Sultan of Delhi. Accordingly an auspicious hour was fixed for the interview.

On the appointed day, the court was arranged and the Sultan sat upon the throne to hold a levee. Bughra

Khan came and performed all the ceremonies required by court, but when approached the throne, the Sultan could no longer bear the degradation of his father; he threw all kingly grandeur, and descending from the throne, cast himself at his father's feet...Father and son burst into tears and embraced each other, ... and the Sultan rubbed his eyes upon his father's feet. This sight drew tears also from the eyes of beholders. Bughra Khan caught his son's hand and led him to the throne. He desired to stand before the throne for a while, but Kaiqubad came down and led his father to the throne and himself took his seat on his own right hand. Then the Delhi Sultan bent his knees and sat respectfully before his father. Afterwards, the father and son met privately and discussed among themselves. Bughra Khan then crossed the Sarju and retired to his own camp.

Before his farewell march to Lakhnawati, Bughra Khan asked his son not to plunge himself in pleasure and dissipation and advised to remove Nizamuddin from the office.[1]

1. Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp. 142-156.

But the poet Amir Khusrau, who accompanied the royal expedition, has given us a different account of the meeting between the father and son in his historical poem Qiran-us-Sadain.[1] Cowell, who has edited the poem, writes thus "Kaikobad's carousings are rudely disturbed by news from the East, of his father's meditated revolt.

Nasiruddin Bughra Khan had hoped to succeed his father Ghiyasuddin Balban when the eldest son Muhammad died, and had been grievously disappointed when the old man fixed his choice on his grandson. Balban died shortly after, a broken old man and civil war seemed imminent, when the dispute was settled by both the rivals retiring and leaving the vacant throne to Nasir's own son, Kai Kobad, the son of Muhammad contenting himself with the government of the Punjab, and the young king's father returning to his old province of Bengal. But his ambition was only stifled for the time, and the tidings of his son's incapacity and follies stirred it into new life; and he prepared to wrest the sceptre from his feeble hands.

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1. Text, pp. 34-35.

His army proceeds by landand by water into Oudh and occupies the province.

Night and day, his one speech is this,
'I am the Sikandar that shall break down Dara
If my father is gone, then am I the world's keeper,
I am the heir of Sulaiman's diadem.'

The king awakes from his dream, and prepares for the contest. He summons his various governors and jagirdars to supply their contingents, and a large army is soon collected from every quarter. .....

On Monday in the early morning, in the month of Zul Hijjah, at the end of the moon the king first shakes his banner to the breeze, and begins his march from Delhi. He proceeds leisurely by slow marches and his time is chiefly occupied in festivities and hunting parties.

When he reached Kilu Khari, information reached about a Mongol invasion and the Sultan despatched a strong army composed of 30,000 horsemen.

When the sun entered bull, the king seems to have commenced the campaign in a more business-like

manner, and he makes his second start in the middle of the month of Rabi ul Awwal.

The first halt is made in the district of Talpat and Afghanpur, five or six cos from Delhi, and there we have the old revelry renewed.

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The army started again and after two marches reached the Jumna. The next stage mentioned is the city of Jaipur; here Barbik is sent forward with part of the army to the river Saru. There he is joined by several Zamindars with their contingents, among them by Chahjui, the Amir of Karrah and the Khan of Awiz.

The father now determines to send a messenger to try his son's temper, to see if his thoughts be those of peace or war, — he accordingly sends a trusty ambassador named Shams Dabir. An interview takes place between the messenger and Barbik, but of course little but idle compliments and threats passes between them. In the meantime the king continues his leisurely marches varied with the same round of festivities. At length he reaches and crosses the Ganges and enters the province of Oudh.

The king and his army, at length, reaches the city of Oude and encamps by the river Gogra.

The son is on one side of the river with all his troops, the father with his troops on the other. The father bursts into tears as he sees his son in the distance and sends a messenger across in a boat. 'Carry' he bids him, 'the news of a father's tears to him who is dear to that father as the apple of his eye.' The son recognises the messenger from the opposite shore, but a feeling of evil pride rises in his bosom and he shoots an arrow at him, forbidding him to advance, and the messenger has to return without delivering the message. Thus ends the first interview.

The father then sends a more official ambassader who delivers a formal speech, chiefly upbraidingthe king for his youth and indiscretion, and trying to recall him to a sense of filial duty. This message is delivered in full darbar, and the young prince haughtily answers it, — his claim is that crowns come not by inheritance butby fate, — besides, he has a peculiar right to the throne from the choice of the old king, his grand-father.

The father, on hearing, at his messenger's return, these stormy words, 'dropped his ear like a shell in the sea,' but on maturer thought determined to send another messenger who might speed better in his mission. He accordingly despatches a messenger, he, who spent his whole life in discourse fine as a hair — if a secret came before him finer than a hair, he cleft its finest point with his kin wit. In this address the father assumes a bolder tone — he appeals from contests of the tongue to that of the sword — he boasts of the number and bravery of his forces, and especially the number of his elephants which he contrasts with the other's cavalry. He admits that his father did leave the throne to his grandson, but he maintains that it was the grandson's part to yield it up to the true heir. He concludes with a challenge,

If thou bindest firm the girdle of hatred
I will enter ere thou dost on the conflict;
Or if this interchange of words leads to kindly feeling
I will not turn my face from thy sincerity;
But on this condition that, according to my design,
I take my father's place and thou take mine.

The young king easily repels his father's boasts of his elephantsand extols his own cavalry — one of his

arguments being a curious one — in chess an elephant is worth less than a knight. However, with all this he feels his inferior place — he owns the moral untenableness of his position.

With all this strength andmight of my army
I do not wish to harm my lord.
I am not equal to thee in the battle
Though I could sew Mount Kaf with my Javelin as a needle,
It is an evil rumour on the lips of men and women, —
The wrath of a child against his father,
The sword which Sohrab drew against Rustom, —
Hast thou not heard what he found from fate ?
If the jewels of peace could but be strung,
With hearty goodwill would I bear the ring in my ear as thy slave.

He tries to justify his still occupying the throne, but with a faltering argument, and thus concludes,

But if in very truth this desire is in thy heart,
I am thy slave, — 'tis thine to command,
Thou askest for me my crown that touches the sky,
Come and meet me that I may throw it at thy feet.

This message a little touches the father's heart and he now disclaims all idea of seizing the throne.

What though I take the throne from thee ?
If I took it from thee, to whom should I give it ?

He then expresses his loyalty and devotion and concludes by begging an interview. The son dictates an answer — 'What though my crowns reaches to the moon ? My head shall be under thy foot.' The father receives it with great joy, and sends his second son Kaus with a reply and many magnificent presents.

The brother proceeds to the king whom he finds in all his magnificence. He advances to the throne and when the kings eye fell on him, straightway he recognised himself in that mirror, in haste he leaped from the lofty throne and seized his princely form in a close embrace. He seated him by his side on the throne, and treated him with the most cordial affection.

The next day early the king calls for his own son Kaiomars and sends him to his grandfather with many rich presents, — with him he sends an experienced councillor to carry the secret instructions, and the two

set off to the Prince of Bengal. They crossed the water — they went to the king of the East, ...

The Governor descends from his throne and meets his grandson as he enters his presence, and leads him to his seat where he places him by his side. He is at first absorbed in the pleasure of seeing his grandson, and totally neglects the minister and the presents, until his eyes happens to fall in that direction, when he recals himself from his preoccupation. The minister then presents his message, and after a very lavish interchange of gifts, the great interview is fixed for the morrow and the two return to the king.

On the morning of the day everybody is astir — the whole day passes in busy preparations — until evening draws near.

When the day waned to its close and the sultry
heat had passed
And the sun was about to sink into the ocean,
The king of the East to cross the river
Asked for a boat swift as the revolving heavens.

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The Prince of Bengal crosses and then follows the meeting.

The Prince's boat flew swifter than an arrow
And in the twinkling of an eye crossed the river,
Soon as he had touched the shore
He saw his pearl on the bank of the stream.
He longed in the agitation of his restless heart
To leap ashore and clasp it to his bosbm.
He sought for patience, but it came not to him,
He sought not for tears, but lo! thy came.
On the other side stood the king Moizzuddin
With all preparations of courtesy after the
manner of kings,
When the king's eye fell on his bewildered visitant,
The more he gazed, the more bewildered himself became,
He rushed forward and scattered a donative of tears,
He flew to meet him and clasped him in his arms.
Each looked the other in a close embrace,
Each lingered long on the other's arms;
Like rose and rose-bud when they leap forth
from winter,
This parts not from that, nor that from this.

A tender dialogue ensues between them and all their jealousies and suspicions are soon set at rest in mutual confidence and affection.

The poet Aamir Khusrau himself looked on the scene amid the crowd of courtiers, and thus he expresses his feelings.

Mutual exchange of gifts of the father and son and the splendid festivity and entertainment followed. Several similar interviews are described, and in one of them the father takes an opportunity of instilling into his son's ear some salutory counsel as to his future reign, while in the parting visit he is represented as warning him against certain evil counsellors. The Sultan returns to his capital in the rainy season."[1]

1. Qiran-us-Sadain, Ed. E.B. Cowell, vide Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1860, pp. 225-38; Ibn Battuta gives a different account. He says, when the news of the accession reached Lakhnawati, Bughra Khan said, "I am the heir to the kingdom; how could my son get it and establish himself in that while I am alive?" He mobilised troops proceeding towards the capital, Delhi, and his son also equipped his army to defend Delhi. They met near the city of Kara on the bank of the Gangeswhere the Hindus make their pilgrimage. Nasiruddin encamped on the other side and the river lay between them. They decided to fight. But God wanted to save the blood of the Musalmans. He put

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From the political point of view the outcome of this historic meeting between Bengal Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Bughra Khan and the Delhi Sultan Kaiqubad was the implied and tacit acceptance of the independence of Bengal by the Delhi Sultan. The Bengal king left the territory of Awadh, which was handed over by Kaiqubad to Khan Jahan Hatim Khan. But Bughra Khan maintained his suzerainty over Bihar and appointed Firuz Aitigin as the Governor of the province.

in the heart of Nasiruddin kind feelings towards his son; and he said, "If my son ascends the throne it is an honour to me; I should rather wish for his accession." And at the same time Sultan Muizuddin was inspired with sentiments of submission to his father. Detaching himself from his army, each got into a boat; and they met in the middle of the river.

Sultan Muizuddin kissed his father's foot and begged his pardon. Then his father said to him, "I am bestowing upon you my kingdom and I entrust you with it;" and he submitted to his son and intended to return to his own dominion. His son said, "you must come along with me to my country", so he accompanied him to Delhi and entered the palace. His father seated him on the

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Kaiqubad on his return to his capital lived a very fast life which led to paralysis. This again led to a power-struggle between the two groups of nobility — the Turks and the Khaljis. The Khaljis succeeded and eventually Kaiqubad died a miserable death at the hands of the Khaljis on 19th Muharram, 689 A.H. (February 1, 1290 A.D.). No contemporary chronicler refers to the reactions of the Bengal king Sultan Nasiruddin to the tragic end of his house at Delhi and the rise of the Khaljis in its place. Bughra Khan discarded the insignia of royalty probably out of disgust for life and not from any fear of the Khalji Sultan of Delhi as the Riyaz suggests and his son Kaikaus was raised to the throne of Bengal.

throne and stood before him. The interview that took place thus between them on the river is known as "Liqa-us-Sadain." (Rehla, Ibn Battuta, tr. by Dr. A.M. Husain, pp. 38-39); According to Isami's Futuh-us-Salatin "Sultan Nasiruddin and Kaiqubad were both eager for a compromise and meeting one another;" (History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p. 72.)

CHAPTER - IV.

BENGAL'S RELATIONS WITH THE KHALJIS AND TUGHLUQS OF DELHI.

The rule of the Balbani dynasty of Bengal from 690 A.H. to 722 A.H. (1291 A.D. to 1322 A.D.) was not disturbed by the Khalji Sultans of Delhi because they, in the period, were either busy with the Mongol menace or with their new base of operations in the Deccan. Sultan Ruknuddin Kaikaus and Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah, the two sons of Sultan Nasiruddin Bughra Khan, were the contemporary independent Bengal kings of the Khaljis of Delhi.

Sultan Jalaluddin Firoz Shah Khalji, whose reign synchronises with the reign of Sultan Ruknuddin Kaikaus in Bengal, was engaged in subduing the rebellious activities of the provincial governors and was also fighting out the Mongols and hence Bengal was left free from the scare of war. The kingdom of Bengal was considered by him as an asylum for the turbulant spirit. He was so averse to award punishment that on one occasion more than one thousand 'Thugs' were captured but instead of punishing them severely the Sultan gave order that they should be put into boats and to be set free in Lakhnawati.[1] Again

1. Tarikh-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp. 189-90.

Alauddin Khalji the nephew and governor of Kara-Manikpur, after his return in Kara on 28 Rajjab, 695 A.H. (2 June, 1296 A.D.) from Devagiri, "prepared for an attack upon Lakhnawati"[1] in order to escape the wrath of his uncle Sultan Jalaluddin Firoz Shah Khalji. He sent Zafar Khan to Awadh to collect boats for the passage of the Sarju. In consultation with his adherents Alauddin Khalji, declared that "as soon as he should hear that the Sultan had marched towards Kara, he would leave it with his elephants and treasure, with his soldiers and all their families, and would cross the Sarju and march to Lakhnawati, which he would seize upon, being sure that no army from Delhi would follow him there".[2] Meanwhile Alauddin wrote two letters one to Sultan Jalaluddin and the other to his own brother Almas Beg, the Akhurbeg at the Delhi court. Almas Beg delivered the letter to the Sultan, who immediately despatched him to Kara. Upon the arrival of Almas Beg at Kara "the crafty counsellors of Alauddin, whom he had promoted to honours advised the abandonment of his design upon Lakhnawati." Alauddin told Almas, writes Barani, "I give up my intention of going to

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 228.

2. Ibid., p. 228.

Lakhnawati. Sultan Jalaluddin in the greed of wealth and elephants has become blind and deaf. .... He will be coming himself."[1]

Jalaluddin Khalji was treacherously murdered on 17 Ramzan, 695 A.H. (20 July, 1296 A.D.) and Alauddin Khalji triumphantly seized the throne of Delhi on 22 Zilhijja, 695 A.H. (20 October 1296 A.D.). The early years of Sultan Alauddin's reign synchronises with the reign of Sultan Ruknuddin Kaikaus, whose independent rule over Bengal came to an end in 701 A.H. (1301 A.D.). Alauddin Khalji, after the success of Hizabruddin Zafar Khan, the Rustom of the age against the Mongols in 699 A.H. (1299 A.D.) planned to send away Zafar Khan with a few thousand horse to Lakhnawati to subdue the country, and "leave him there

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 230; Ma'asir-i-Rahimi, Text, Abul Baqi Nihavandi, p. 320. Abdul Baqi writes, "Later on it was brought to his mind that Sultan Jalaluddin in the greed of horses, elephants will be coming to us all alone. We will finish him off and will capture his kingdom. Where is the need to go to Lakhnawati."

to supply elephants and tribute to the Sultan."[1] But this idea of the Khalji Sultan of Delhi was not materialised and hence it can be concluded that Bengal succeeded in maintaining its independence and sovereignty during the rule of the Khaljis at Delhi.

But with the rise of the Tughluqs at Delhi attempts were resumed to reduce "Rebel Bengal" to subjection.

Sultan Rukmuddin Kaikaus who assumed the title "Sultan-us-Salatin" rules over Bengal and Bihar independently for a period of not less than eight years and issued coins and inscriptions till at least 698 A.H. (1298 A.D.). During his rule, the kingdom of Bengal comprised four main political units namely, Bihar, Satgaon, Bang and Kamrup fencing in Lakhnawati and Rarh. Rukmuddin

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 254. This statement of Barani proves that the Khalji Sultan had no authority in Bengal and hence he contemplated to send Zafar Khan there to bring Bengal under his domain. The Khalji Sultan had another intention, i.e. to keep the valiant Zafar Khan at a safe distance.

Kaikaus was succeeded by Sultan Shamsuddin Firoz Shah probably in 701 A.H. (1301 A.D.). The identity of Sultan Shamsuddin Firoz Shah has not yet been established. Ibn Battuta[1] includes him among the discendants of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Bughra Khan but this is not confirmed by any contemporary record. This most powerful Sultan of Bengal ruled upto 722 A.H. (1322 A.D.) and succeeded in extending the Muslim power into the modern district of Mymensingh and thence across the Brahmaputra into the Sylhet district of present Bangladesh.

According to available numismatic evidence, Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz reigned peacefully over Bihar, Lakhnawati, Satgaon and Bang till 707 A.H. (1307-08 A.D.). After this, his reign was disturbed by the rebellious activities of his sons, among whom Jalaluddin was the first, who issued coins in his own name in 707 A.H. from the Lakhnawati mint. Ghiyasuddin Bahadur, the most turbulent amongst the sons of Sultan Shamsuddin Firoz supplanted the authority of Jalaluddin and also of his father in or about 710 A.H. (1310 A.D.) and ruled over Lakhnawati and Sonargaon from 710 A.H. to 728 A.D. (1310-27 A.D.) with two interruptions. He was expelled by his father Shamsuddin

1. Rehla, Text, Ibn Battuta, pp. 236ff.

Firuz from Lakhnawati in 715 A.H. (1316 A.D.). But in 717 A.H. (1317 A.D.) another son of Firuz, named Shihabuddin Bughdah seized the throne of Lakhnawati and ruled there as an independent Sultan for two years, and then terminated again by his father. Meanwhile Ghiyasuddin Bahadur captured and continued his independent rule over Sonargaon and also challenged the authority of his father over Lakhnawati between 720 A.H. to 722 A.H. (1320 - 1322 A.D.). Shamsuddin Firuz probably died in 722 A.H.(1322 A.D.) and Ghiyasuddin Bahadur became the virtual ruler of Sonargaon and Lakhnawati. After the death of his father probably a war of succession began amongst the sons of Shamsuddin Firuz and perhaps Ghiyasuddin Bahadur succeeded in establishing himself as the undisputed master of Bengal. According to Ibn Battuta,[1] Bahadur murdered his youngest brother Qutlu Khan, and turned out the eldest Shihabuddin and Nasiruddin Ibrahim from Bengal. These two brothers of Bahadur, having failed to seize the throne of Lakhnawati, according to Ibn Battuta,[2] made their way to Delhi and implored

1. Rehla, Ibn Battuta - Tr. by Dr. A.M. Husain, p.50.

2. Ibid., p. 50.

Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah Gazi's aid to restore their authority over the throne of Lakhnawati. But Barani[1] differs from Ibn Battuta and says that some of the amirs of Lakhnawati came to Delhi seeking redress of the oppressive laws under which they were suffering, and informing the Sultan of the distress and tyranny under which they and other Musalmans laboured. So Ghiyasuddin Tughluq resolved to march upon Lakhnawati. It should be noted here that neither Ibn Battuta's diary nor Barani's account is corroborated by any other contemporary authority.

In any event, it can be said that the uncertain political condition of Bengal provided the Delhi Sultan a splendid opportunity of reducing Bengal to subjection and to restore once again the suzerainty of Delhi over the region. Ghiyasuddin Tughluq despatched couriers to summon Ulugh Khan from Warrangal and appointed him his viceregent and placed all affairs of the kingdom under his management during the Sultan's absence.

Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah Ghazi began his 'fateful' march towards Bengal at the beginning of 724 A.H.

1. Tarik-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 450.

(January 1324 A.D.). When the Sultan reached Tirhut, the last Hindu Karnatak kingdom of Mithila,[1] Sultan Nasiruddin, the ruler of Lakhnawati as told by Barani,[2] came forward and pay homage to the Delhi Sultan at Tirhut. Nasiruddin offered his assistance to capture and bring Bahadur Shah to Tughluq Shah if the Sultan would send a contingent with him. The Tughluq Sultan accepted the offer of Nasiruddin, and sent his adopted son and best general Bahram Khan, alias Tatar Khan, at the head of a strong army along with Nasiruddin.

Bahadur Shah was then in his newly founded city, Ghyaspur situated in the modern district of Mymensingh.

1. According to the Basatin-i-Uns, the Sultan, after conquering Lakhnawati and Sonargaon, advanced to Tirhut. (vide Tughluq Dynasty, Dr. A.M. Husain, p. 76.) Firishta also has the same contention (Tarikh-i-Firishta, Vol.I, p. 234).

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 451. But Ibn Battuta writes "Shihabuddin and Nasiruddin fled to Tughluq (at Delhi) who marched along with both of them. ..." (Rehla, Ibn Battuta, ed. by Dr. A.M. Husain, p. 50.)

When the Delhi army under Bahram Khan reached the neighbourhood of Lakhnawati, Bahadur Shah came out of the city to face the imperialists. Isami[1] is perhaps the only contemporary historian, who has given a full account of the

1. The account of the struggle of Bahadur Shah against the imperial army in the light of Futuh-us-Salatin is given in the History of Bengal, Vol.II, pp. 85-86 thus:

"Next day both armies got into battle array for the encounter. Bahadur posted himself in the centre. ... For a time the right and left wings of both the armies pressed one another. Then the Purah (Bhurah, Bahadur) moved forward saying unto himself, 'Today is verily the day of Id (festival) for me, now that I draw my sword against the hosts of Delhi'. Then Bahadur fell upon the left-hand side (of the imperial centre where his hated brother Nasiruddin was posted) with such vigour that the troops on the left hand side gave way. ... But the imperialists rectified their position, and in their turn pressed the Bengal army so hard that Bahadur's army was thrown into confusion. Bahadur found no other alternative except retreat, and when he retraced his steps to some distance, the imperialists withdrawn swords, charged and spread carnage and terror in the ranks of Bahadur — Bahadur during the confusion of the flight remembered

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struggle between the Bengal army and the Delhi army. From Barani[1] it is found that Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Sonargaon made some resistance but was chased, captured and conducted to the Sultan like a runaway horse with a halter thrown upon his neck. Ghiyasuddin Tughluq spent about a month or two at Lakhnawati consolidating the hold of Delhi over Bengal. He divided Bengal into two administrative units and confirmed Sultan Nasiruddin as 'Zabita' of North Bengal with its capital at Lakhnawati; Satgaon and Sonargaon were placed under the charge of Bahram Khan. Bahadur was taken away a captive to Delhi.

that his heart-ravishing concubine, of silvery complexion and rosy cheeks, was in his tent. .... Bahadur turned his face towards his camp for taking away with himself that moon-faced one."

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. III, p. 235; Ibn Battuta writes Ghiyasuddin Tughluq "marched with great speed to the province of Lakhnawati, captured it and took its ruler Ghiyasuddin Bahadur prisoner and brought him captive to his capital". (Rehla, ed. by Dr. A.M. Husain, p. 51.)

Nasiruddin Ibrahim proved his loyalty by issuing coins in the name of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq jointly with his own in 724 A.H. (1324 A.D.) from the Lakhnawati mint and continued the same usage and practice during the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq probably upto 726 A.H. (1326 A.D.). But Muhammad bin Tughluq was made of different stuff, who adopted an effective policy of "checks and balances" towards Bengal to maintain the hold of Delhi over the region. Muhammad bin Tughluq made the following arrangements in order to put a check on the ambition of Bahram Khan and Sultan Nasiruddin Ibrahim. He released the captive Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah and loaded him with high honour. Bahadur was sent to Sonargaon to rule over that province as a 'vassal king' in co-operation with Bahram Khan as the representative of the Delhi Sultan. Ghiyasuddin Bahadur also pledged to remain loyal to the Sultan and to send his son Muhammad alias Barbat as a hostage to the Delhi court.[1] Malik Pindar (or Bedar) Khalji, entitled Qadr Khan, was appointed feudatory of Lakhnawati, Malik Abu Rija as Nizam-ul-Mulk and Wazir of the same administrative unit. Izzuddin Yahya as Azam Malik was appointed to the governorship of

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 461; Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 98.

Satgaon.[1] Thus the kingdom of Bengal was divided by Muhammad bin Tughluq into three well-controlled administrative units — Sonargaon, Lakhnawati and Satgaon. The Delhi Sultan thus tried to eliminate the possibility of any future rebellion by placing permanent representatives of the centre in all the administrative units of Bengal. With regard to Nasiruddin Ibrahim, Sultan Muhammad was too much cautious. He was allowed to continue as the ruler of Lakhnawati without any power. Qadr Khan enjoyed the real power though theoretically he was subordinate to Nasiruddin, and responsible for his activities only to the Delhi Sultan. Sultan Muhammad had no faith on Nasiruddin and Bahadur; because he had an apprehension that both might make a common cause against Delhi for the restoration of Bengal's independence. As a matter of fact, shortly, Nasiruddin was directed to join the Sultan with the imperial army at Multan against the rebel, Kishlu Khan. His name was omitted from the coinage of Lakhnawati from 727 A.H. (1327 A.D.) onwards. Perhaps he died some time after 728 A.H. (17 November, 1727 to 4 November, 1328).

1. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 98.

For some time this plan of Sultan Muhammad worked well in keeping Bengal divided regionally. Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah ruled Sonargaon jointly with Bahram Khan from 725 A.H. to 728 A.H. (1325 to 1328 A.D.). He issued coins from the Sonargaon mint in the joint names of himself and Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. But "he was not of the mettle to play a second fiddle or care for the ignoble ease of splendid vessalage."[1]

When Muhammad bin Tughluq was busy in dealing with the rebel Kishlu Khan at Multan, Ghiyasuddin Bahadur took the opportunity and raised the standard of rebellion at Sonargaon[2] and made a bid for the sovereignty of the whole of Bengal. In 729 A.H. (1328 A.D.) he asserted his independence by striking coins[3] in his own name. He also evaded the despatch of his son to Delhi. Isami writes

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.88.

2. Rehla, Ibn Battuta, pp. 95-96.

3. On the initial coinage of Bengal, Edward Thomas, p. 55; vide, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Num. Sup. XXXV, p. 152, 153. The date of the rebellion is 730 A.H. (1330-31 A.D.) (Vide,The Coins of the Muhammadan States of India in British Museum,S.Lanepoole, p. 11).

thus, "when the Sultan became free from that affair (i.e. the Bahram Aiba Kishlu Khan's rebellion) and the army reached Dipalpur from Multan on the fifth day, there arrived one day a courier from Bahram Khan of Lakhnawati to the Sultan joyous and happy. He uttered benedictions to the Sultan after 'Zamin-bos' and submitted with folded hands, your Majesty, Shah Bura had revolted and had caused much bloodshed and disturbances in Lakhnawati. Bahram Khan marched with an army along with all the chiefs in the direction of the river Khun and had so many of Bura's men killed that the land wasmoistened with the flood of blood. That brave Khan by one single assault compltely defeated Bura. Bura after having sustained defeat turned his reins towards a river and plunged himself into the waters, but his horse stuck like a donkey in the mud. The Khan, subduer of the world, chased them from behind, and Bura fell alive a captive into his hands. Then he killed him and flayed his skin. The Khan has sent that skin as a wonderful message of victory to the fortunate Khusru ..... The Sultan was highly pleased to hear this and ordered public rejoicings to the beat of drums and play of music for four days in the city of Dipalpur. Then he held a darbar and proclaimed from the throne that the skin of that stupid Bura must be put by the side of theskin of

Bahram and both skins should be displayed together from a height like two kernels in one shell."[1]

Thus came to an end the career of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur who tried to assert his independence by striking coins in his own name, and with it the rule of the house of Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz i.e. the Balbani house of Bengal also came to an end. With the fall and death of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur there remained none among the children of the soil to draw the sword again against Delhi for the independence of Bengal till the rise of Haji Ilyas, a decade after. The three main regions of Bengal — Lakhnawati, Satgaon and Sonargaon passed under the authority of Delhi and were governed by Qadr Khan, Malik Izzudin Yahya and Bahram Khan alias Tatar Khan respectively; But there was an "attempt at rebellion against the authority of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq for about ten years more after the suppression of the last rebellion of Bahadur Shah."[2]

According to the Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi,[3] Bahram

1. Futuh-us-Salatin, Text, p. 428.
2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.89.
3. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 104.

Khan the Governor of Sonargaon died a natural death at Sonargaon in the year 738 A.H. (1338 A.D.). Barani[1] tells us that while Muhammad bin Tughluq was engaged in the Doab expeditions, Bahram Khan died and after his death the rebellion of Fakhra broke out in Bengal. Yahya bin Ahmed[2] describes Fakhra as Fakhruddin, the Silahdar or armour-bearer of Bahram Khan, who after the death of his master assumed the government. A comparative study of the slightly contradictory accounts given in the Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi,[3] the Rehla,[4] Tarikhi-Mubarak Shahi,[5] Muntakhabut Tawarikh,[6] Tabqat-i-Akbari,[7] Tarikh-i-Firishta,[8] Haji Dabir,[9] the Riyaz-u's-Salatin[10] and thenumismatic evidence shows that

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 480.
2. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 104.
3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 480.
4. Rehla, Text, Ibn Battuta, p. 195.
5. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, pp.104-05.
6. Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Text, Badayuni, Vol.I, p.230.
7. Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Nizamuddin, p. 205.
8. Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol.II, pp. 574-75.
9. Arabic History of Gujarat, Text, III, pp. 972-73.
10. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, pp. 91-94.

during the period between 739 A.H. to 741 A.H. (1338 to 1341 A.D.) a power struggle broke out for the supremacy over Bengal between Delhi authorities and Fakhruddin of Sonargaon. As a result of this Sonargaon and Lakhnawati were lost to Delhi and thus the efforts made by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq to stem out the tide of Bengal's independence also failed.

Fakhruddin raised the standard of rebellion and took the title of Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah. He asserted his independence by assuming royal titles and the boastful epithets such as "Yamin-Khalifa-i-Allah and Nasir-i-Amir-ul-Muminin."[1] This bold assertion of independence could not be tolerated by Muhammad bin Tughluq, who appears to have commissioned certain amirs — Malik Hisamuddin Abu Rija, the Mustaufi-i-mumalik (Auditor-General) of the empire, Azam Malik Izzuddin Yahya, Muqti of Sategaon and Firoz Khan, the Governor of Kara under the leadership of Qadr Khan, the Governor of Lakhnawati to march against the rebel Fakhruddin. The combined army defeated Fakhruddin and compelled him to withdraw from Sonargaon with his forces. Thus Sonargaon was again came

1. Vide, The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol.VI. The Delhi Sultanate, p. 196.

under the yoke of Delhi. Qadr Khan took the possession of the capital city of Sonargaon, while excepting Malik Abu Rija, all other imperial officers went back to their respective headquarters. But hardly a year passed, a dramatic change took place at Sonargaon due to the impolitic and contumelious attitude of Qadr Khan. He refused to share the booty acquired from Sonargaon with his soldiers and thus created great dissaffection among them. The fugitive rebel Fakhruddin took the opportunity, carried on secret negotiations with the disaffected soldiers of Qadr Khan and beseiged Sonargaon. The discontended soldiers of Qadr Khan made common cause with him, openly rebelled and assassinated him. Thereupon Fakhruddin was again acknowledged as the ruler of Sonargaon and with it the decline of the suzerainty of Delhi over Bengal again began.

At that time Muhammad bin Tughluq was overburdened with a chain of rebellions which spread from the north to the south. This opportunity widened the ambition of Fakhruddin and he sent an army under a 'ghulam' of his Mukhlis to capture Lakhnawati. But Ali Mubarak, the ariz-i-Lashkar, i.e., the muster - master of Qadr Khan killed Mukhlis and established himself over Lakhnawati. Ali Mubarak solicited, in vain, for his confirmation as Governor of Lakhnawati from Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. The Sultan

overlooked his claim and appointed Malik Yusuf, the Shahna-i-Delhi (Prefect of Delhi) as Governor of Lakhnawati, who however, died on the way before reaching Lakhnawati. The Sultan of Delhi was so much embarrassed by the widespread rebellion all over the empire that he was obliged to leave Lakhnawati to its fate and hence Delhi lost all contact with Bengal since 740 A.H. (1339-40 A.D.).

Ali Mubarak, however, for some time kept up the pretence of vassalage to the Delhi court, and made repeated representations for the early despatch of an imperial representative to Lakhnawati. But when he found the Sultan of Delhi engaged in quelling down the rebellions he felt secure of his position, threw away the mask and asserted his independence assuming the title of Sultan Alauddin Ali Shah. This, however, brought him into clash with Fakhruddin. He had to face a number of expeditions led by Sultan Fakhruddin, who "during the seasonof winter and mud used to make expeditions up the river against the land of Lakhnawati, because of his naval superiority." But during the rainless season Ali Mubarak "make raids by land on Bengal, because of his superiority in land-forces". Both the parties were unsuccessful in their bids; and both of them continued to rule independently over Lakhnawati and Sonargaon respectively. Delhi did not make any more interfere in the affairs of Bengal.

But very soon after a period of one year and five months, a new personality appeared on the political field of Bengal named Ilyas, a foster brother of Ali Mubarak. Ilyas entered into a contest with Ali Mubarak for the throne of Lakhnawati, but being defeated, retired to South Bengal, Satgaon, where he succeeded in carving out a kingdom of his own and issued coins in his own name from 743 A.H. (1342 A.D.) onwards. Thus Bengal was again divided into three parts, with Fakhruddin, Ali Mubarak and Ilyas ruling respectively over Sonargaon, Lakhnawati and Satgaon. Ali Mubarak ruled till 743 A.H. (1342 A.D.), When he was overthrown by Illyas. But Fakhruddin ruled over Sonargaon for a few years more and died in 750 A.H. (1350 A.D.).[1] He was succeeded most probably by his son Ikhtiyaruddin Ghazi Shah, who issued coins in his name from Sonargaon

1. According to Afif, Text, p. 137, and Yahya Sirhindi (Text, p. 105), Fakhruddin was captured and later beheaded by Ilyas Shah. But according to Ghulam Husain Salim (Text, p. 96), he was killed by Ali Mubarak in 741 A.H. Neither of these views about the death of Fakhruddin seems to be true. Fakhruddin died a natural death.

in 750 A.H. (1350 A.D.) and 753 A.H. (1353 A.D.), in which year he was defeated and overthrown by Ilyas Shah. Thus Ilyas Shah succeeded in unifying three parts of Bengal under one rule, which inaugurated a new chapter in the history of Bengal.

Ilyas Shah ascended the throne of Lakhnawati in 743 A.H. under the title of Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah. He founded an independent dynasty of able and vigorous rulers and himself carried his victorious arms far outside the boundaries of Bengal. Ilyas Shah was an energetic and ambitious Sultan, who had led his victorious forces as far as Chilka Lake[1] near Puri and Kathmandu[2] the capital of Nepal. The Bengal king had given provocation to the Delhi Sultan Firoz Shah on account of his conquest of Tirhut[3]

1. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p.75; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 96.

2. Patan andSvayambhu Nath Inscription at Kathmandu, 1371-72 A.D. vide, History of Nepal and surrounding kingdoms, C. Bendall; Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. LXXII, 1903, pp. 10-11.

3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi,Text, Barani, p.586; Inshai Mahru, p. MS. F. 21; Medieval poets andkings of Mithila, Grierson, vide Indian Antiquary, Vol.XIV, 1885, p.192. History of Tirhut, S.N. Singh, p. 57.

and Bihar[1] and raids upon Banaras,[2] Gorakhpur[3] and Baharaich[4] and had challenged the suzerainty of the Delhi Sultan. Probably this was the reason for which Sultan Firoz Shah of Delhi decided to measure his sword with the Bengal King. Ilyas Shah's increasing power, in the words of Edward Thomas, "excited the emperor Firoz III to proceed against him in all the pomp and following of an Oriental Suzerain, resulting only in the confession of weakness, conveniently attributed to the periodical flooding of the country — which effectively laid the

1. Bihar Sharif Inscription, vide Epigraphia Indica, 1955-56, Arabic and Persian Supplement, pp. 6-7; Rajgir Jain Inscription, verse 5-6, vide Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna, Vol.V, 1919, p. 339; New Light on Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq's first invasion of Bengal, Abdul Momin Choudhury, vide, Journal of Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Vol.VIII, 1963, pp. 47-54.

2. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p. 33; South Eastern district of U.P. Imperial Gazetteers, Vol.VII, p. 178.

3. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 33-36; Eastern District of U.P. Imperial Gazetteers, Vol. XII, p. 331.

4. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 35-36.

foundation of the ultimate independence of Bengal."[1] Firoz Shah considered it his duty to recover Bengal which acknowledged the suzerainty of Delhi during the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah and continued to do so till 740 A.H.

The court chroniclers[2] of Sultan Firoz Shah have tried to magnify the so-called atrocities supposed to have been perpetrated by Sultan Ilyas Shah and to justify the Delhi Sultan's invasion against Bengal not on political grounds but on those of religion and morality. But they have forgotten that Firoz Shah undertook his Bengal campaign at a time when Sultan Ilyas Shah was raiding the territories of the Sultanate of Delhi and was in control of Gorakhpur. The apologist-historians have tried to prove Ilyas as tyrant and treacherous, who, according to them, was trampling upon the rights and liberties of the Muslims and Hindus of Bengal and Tirhut and Firoz Shah appeared there as a saviour, and as a true Musalman to put an end to the atrocities of the king of Bengal.

1. The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi, pp. 268-69.

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 586; Inshai Mahru, MS. F. 21-22; Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 33-41.

Leaving Khan-i-Jahan in the charge of the capital, Sultan Firoz Shah having assembled a large force consisting of seventy thousand soldiers and a flotilla of boats[1] marched towards Lakhnawati with his nobles and great men. This expedition began on 10th Shawwal, 754 A.H. (8 November, 1354 A.D.). Sultan Firoz marched through Awadh, where several chieftains with a number of boats joined him, which enhanced the strength of the imperial army. The Bengal army and navy tried to intercept the imperial forces while it was trying to across the Sarju, but failed and the Delhi army burst into the kingdoms of Gorakhpur and Champaran. The Bengal army and navy tried to oppose the imperial forces at every point such as the confluences of the Sarju and the Ganges, and the Gandak and the Ganges, but being out-matched at each of the places retired towards Kusi. The Rais of Kharosa and Gorakhpur who during the last part of the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq had stopped paying tribute submitted forthwith before Sultan Firoz and his imperial army with their followers. Rai Udai Singh of Gorakhpur paid twenty lakh tankas and had given two elephants as a mark of submission. He was awarded a

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, p. 109.

Khilat and a canopy.[1] Rai Kanawar[2] also paid the dues.

Meanwhile Ilyas Shah received the information about Firoz Shah's advance and he retreated from Gorakhpur to Tirhut and then to Bengal. Barani[3] writes that when the Delhi Sultan reached Tirhut, its Rai together with the Zamindars and Ranas attended the royal court and offered presents, and in return the Sultan also awarded robes to them. The account of Barani is corroborated by the native sources,[4] according to which at this time a new dynasty was

1. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, pp. 124-25.

2. Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Nizamuddin Ahmad, p.114. Rai Kanwar's name is not recorded by any contemporary authority.

3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 589.

4. Kirti Lata of Vidyapati, ed. by Dr. Babu Ram Saxena, pp. 10-11; History of Mithila, Upendra Thakur, pp. 290-93; History of Tirhut, S.N. Singh, p.69; Chronology of Oiniwara dynasty of Mithila, Vijai Kant Misra, vide, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Vol. XVI, pp. 200-06; History of Mithila during Pre-Mughul Age, Man Mohan Chakrabarty, vide, Journal and Proceedings of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. II, 1915, N.S., pp. 415-16.

founded by Kameshwar of Oiniwara at Tirhut and further alluded Bhogishwar, the ruler of Tirhut as a friend and ally of Firoz Shah. Resuming his march when Sultan Firoz arrived on the banks of the Kosi, he found Ilyas Shah's army posted on the other side of the river, near its junction with the Ganges. The passage appeared difficult, but the Sultan with the assistance of the Rai of Jiaran succeeded in crossing the river.

After crossing the river Kosi, Firoz Shah with the imperial army marched direct to Pandua alias Firuzabad, the capital of Bengal. Pandua being an unprotected city, Ilyas Shah evacuated it and took shelter in the fortress of Ekdala. Sultan Firoz entered and occupied Pandua unopposed and then tried to win over the support and sympathy of the local people by issuing proclamations.[1] He guaranteed complete security of life and property to the citizens of Pandua and having denounced Ilyas Shah as a rebel an impious Muslim and slaughter of women, called upon the people of Bengal to disown him as Sultan and to rally round the Delhi Sultan. Attempt was also made to

1. Insha-i-Mahru, MS. F. 22-23; vide, Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal, New Series, XIX, 1923, pp. 279-80.

gain the support of the Bengalis by numerous promises; "the bait of increased grants of lands, stipends to the Muslim theologians, remission of the current year's revenue and reversion to the land-revenue system of the Bengal Sultan were offered to the Muqaddams, and the captains of 'paiks' were offered a cent per cent increase in their fiefs and allowances on their joining with their full contingents, or an increase of fifty per cent on their bringing up only one half, and the confirmation of their existing lands and stipends, on their coming singly." These farmans, however, did not produce any result. However, Firoz Shah, had the "Khutba" read in his name and renamed Pandua as Firozabad,[1] and resumed his march towards Ekdala.

Firoz Shah reached Ekdala on 7th Rabi-ul-Awwal, 755 A.H. (1 April 1354 A.D.).[2] The imperial army fortified

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp. 589-90. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 111-12; and 122. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p. 44.

2. Barani and Afif do not mention any date, but the later chroniclers like Bakshi Nizamuddin Ahmad (Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, p. 114) and Firishta (Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol.I, p. 146) have recorded the date noted above;

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their temporary camp with "Katghars" and dug trenches on all sides. They besieged the fort by throwing "incessant shower of stones and other missiles." Minor skirmishes continued between the patrols, but Sultan Ilyas Shah deliberately avoided any open confrontation with the imperial army. He expected immediate rains and flood which would force retreat on the Delhi Sultan. In the meantime Delhi troops were subjected to an unfriendly weather — hot winds made their position worse. The mosquitos also were so large and numerous that neither men nor horses would have been able to endure their stings. Under the circumstances, Firoz held consultations and decided that he should fall back strategically a few Kos towards Delhi. Some "Qalandars" or tutored spies were asked to spread the rumour that the Sultan had beat a

Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya Sirhindi, p. 125 records 27th Rabi ul Awwal (21 April, 1354 A.D.). The seige was raised on 29th Rabi ul Awwal 755 A.H. (23 April 1354 A.D.). If we are to accept the date supplied by Yahya then it can be said that the duration of the seige was only of two days, whereas Riyaz-us-Salatin (p. 97) stated that it continued for twenty two days. Salim seems to be more reliable.

retreat with all his forces and baggage towards Delhi. Accordingly, the seige was withdrawn on 29th Rabi ul-Awwal 755 A.H. (23 April, 1354 A.D.) and the Delhi Sultan retreated seven Kos towards Delhi on the bank of the river where the eddies had formed a ford. Qalandars were arrested and were taken into the presence of the Bengal Sultan, where they narrated the so-called flight of the imperial army. Deluded by the Qalandars, Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah came out of the fort on 5th Rabi ul Akhir 755 A.H. (29 April, 1354 A.D.) with his army, which consisted of ten thousand horse, two lakh infantry and fifty elephants.[1]

Sultan Firoz being succeeded to lure the Sultan of Bengal to come out of the fortress of Ekdala, had drawn up his army in three divisions right, left and centre each consisted of thirty thousand warriors under Malik Dilan,

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp.111-14; Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp.590-91; Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p. 45, says that the number of the Bengal army was Eight lakh; Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 125; Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Bakshi Nizamuddin, pp.114-15; Muntakhab ut Tawarikh, Text, Vol.I, Badyuni, p.244; Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol.I, p.146 is not very elaborate in their accounts.

the Mir Shikar, Malik Hisamuddin Nua and Tatar Khan respectively. The elephants were also divided among the divisions. The Sultan himself directed the operations, supervised the arrangement and encouraged all the three divisions of the army. All preparations having been completed, the drums were beaten and the din of war arose between the two armies. Ilyas Shah perceived that it would be impossible for him now to avoid any open engagement with the imperialists. The Bengal army opened the attack on the imperial left wing under Hisamuddin Nua, which was strongly maintained. Malik Dilan with his right and Tatar Khan from the centre came forward to assist and reinforce the imperial left wing. Soon the battle became general and fierce contest ensued. After the shooting of arrows, both the sides used their spears and swords, and when the conflict became closer, the soldiers seized each other by waist bands and grappled in a deadly strife. The Bengalis, particularly the "paiks" fought resolutely and after much fighting and slaughter, the Bengalis were seen flying away from the battle field in confusion and disorder before sunset. The battle thus ended in the discomfiture of the Bengalis. Sultan Shamsuddin retreated hastily and re-entered the fort.[1]

1. Tarikh Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 115-17.

The court-historians, as usual, have tried to magnify the success of the Delhi Sultan and his army. Barani[1] writes that after the flight of Ilyas Shah the Delhi army collected as the spoils of war forty four elephants, a large number of horses and the royal canopy of the Bengal Sultan. Afif's[2] version that the king of Bengal, out of all his enormous force fled with only seven horsemen, that an order was given for collecting the heads of the slain Bengalis and a silver tanka was offered for every head, and that the heads so collected numbered more than one lakh eighty thousand seems to be an incredible exaggeration. The author of the Sirat[3] puts the number of slain Bengalis as sixty thousand. Among the slain was Sahdeo, the Chief of Bengal Paiks.[4] The imperialists also must have suffered heavily because the battle had raged for a whole day over an extant of seven Kos. Besides the heavy loss of life a good number of Bengali soldiers were taken prisoners as booty, who were paraded before the Sultan. The mighty elephants impressed the Khans and

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 592.
2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, p. 121.
3. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p. 45.
4. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 125.

Maliks alike, and Sultan Firoz Shah is reported to have remarked that those elephants were the cause of Sultan Ilyas's vanity.[1] Turning to the Bengali prisoners the Delhi Sultan brandished his sword and asked where were those who had boasted that they would slay him.[2] Firoz on the next day marched to Ekdala and again besiged the fort. Afif writes that[3] when he arrived near the fort to direct the operations, all the ladies and respectable women went to the top of the fort, and when they saw the Delhi Sultan, they uncovered their heads and in their distress made great lamentation. Hearing their wailings, Firoz Shah decided not to storm the fort, put more Musalmans to the sword, and expose honourable women to ignominy. Tatar Khan repeatedly urged the Sultan to continue the seige and annex the territory. But the Sultan did not deem it prudent to annexe the newly conquered territory; ordered the raising of the seige and

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, pp. 593-94.

2. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p. 46.

3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 118-19; Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 47-48 also mentions the appeal for mercy by Bengali ladies.

released the captured Bengali soldiers. The Sultan then collected his army and left for Delhi. It is really strange that the Bengal King was not dislodged from his throne, nor did the fort of Ekdala open its gates to the imperialists. The author of the Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi[1] writes that after his defeat, Ilyas Shah gave up animosity. He appeared before the Delhi Sultan sought forgiveness for his misconduct and agreed to pay annual tribute as a mark of submission. But it is very difficult to rely upon the statement of the Sirat because it is not corroborated by contemporaries like Afif and Barani. Moreover, the story of wailings and lamentations of the Bengali women for forbearance and the consequent liberation of Ekdala seem to be fanciful. Ilyas's men could hardly have permitted such a dramatic performance. Possibly Ilyas could not resist the onslaught of the

1. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, p.49. Later chroniclers like Bakshi Nizamuddin (Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, p. 115), Badayuni (Muntakhab ut Tawarikh, Text, Vol.I, p.244) and Firishta (Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol.I, p.146), opine that due to rains Sultan Firoz Shah signed a peace and returned to Delhi. Firishta, however, adds that the Delhi Sultan returned with a resolution to lead an expedition to Bangal again.

imperialists. But Sultan Firoz being tired of campaigning in the rainy season and was very much eager to raise the seige and to retire. The court historians, therefore, seem to have cooked up the story as a face-saving device for their patron to withdraw without carrying the seige to completion. Firoz might have said that he did not like to shed unnecessary blood of Musalmans of which he boasts in his Futuhat. But probably this statement was also made to justify his sure withdrawal. According to A.H. Dani, the contemporary authors "have tried to conceal the detail of the concluding events that forced Firoz to march back to Delhi without achieving his aim."[1] On the basis of an inscription[2] attributed to Chora II of the Kona dynasty of Vizagapatam, a tributory of the Ganga rulers of Orissa, the modern scholar tried to reconstruct the history thus, "while Ilyas entrenched himself behind the Ekdala fort, he must have sent emissories to the Ganga ruler of Orissa

1. New light on Sultan Firoz Shah's expedition to Bengal, Dr. A.H. Dani, vide Journal of Pakistan Historical Society, Vol. X, Part II, 1962, p. 184.

2. The inscription has been translated by Prof. Nobel as follows : "But this was an unique (and) wonderful (deed);having set out to protect the harrassed army of the Sultan of Pandua and having by the strength of (his)

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for help. The Ganga ruler came along with his feudatory chief Chora II of the present inscription. On the arrival of the Hindu forces, Ilyas Shah must have been encouraged to come out of the fort and give battle to Firoz openly. It is very difficult to draw any definite conclusion regarding the result of this battle. Both the sides claim victory and to have won elephants. In any case it is clear that the assistance from the Hindu raja turned to scale in Firoz's first expedition to Bengal in favour of the Bengali Sultan and that added strength was partly responsible for the future independence of Bengal. It is this sting from the ruler of Orissa which bit Firoz Shah and made him decide to raid into Jajnagar when he came to invade Bengal second time."[1] Thus ended in failure[2] Firoz Shah's first

arm completely vanquished the ruler of Dilli, that king gave the goddess of victory together with twenty two great elephants to the king of Utkala and the Turks to the excellent damsels of the gods." (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XIX, 1927-28, pp. 159-60, vide Ibid., p. 185).

1. Ibid., p. 186.

2. Woolseley Haig describes it as "infructuous victory" (vide Cambridge History of India, Delhi, ed. Vol. III, p. 263); Thomas Edward writes that the invasion only

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attempt to establish Delhi's hold over Bengal. The terms of the peace are not stated by the contemporary historians, but according to much later version as recorded by Ghulam Hussain Salim,[1] during the seige of Ekdala, Shaikh Makhdum Raja Biyabani in whom Haji Ilyas had great faith died. The Bengal king came out of the fort to join the funeral of the Shaikh. After performing the last rites, he met Sultan Firoz and a peace was signed under which the Delhi Sultan released the soldiers of Bengal including a son of Ilyas, and the Bengal king in return promised to send regular tribute and presents. This version cannot be accepted as Ghulam Husain wrote more than four hundred years after the incident and without mentioning any authority for it. The only important feature of this expedition is that Ilyas Shah had to face defeats and it blew up his aggressive expansionism threatening the security of the Delhi Sultanate

resulted "in the confession of weakness, conveniently attributed to the periodical flooding of the country." (vide The Chronicles of the Pathan kings of Delhi, pp. 268-69). N.K. Bhattasali supports the above contention, (vide, Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal, p. 29).

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin, pp. 97-98.

and its eastern frontiers. The Bengal king was deprived of all his conquests to the west of Lakhnawati but he continued to rule as an independent king in Bengal, even though the court historians refer to him as paying tribute. During the rest of his rule he cultivated friendly relations with the court of Delhi.

Sultan Firoz Shah and his army left Bengal on 27th Rabi-ul-Akhir, 755 A.H. (21 May, 1354 A.D.)[1] and entered Delhi on the 12th Shaban, 755 A.H. (1 September, 1354 A.D.) after an absence of eleven months.[2]

After the return of Firoz Shah, Haji Ilyas occupied Pandua and restored his authority over Bengal.[3] But as a mark of peace and friendship plenipotentiaries from Ilyas Haji of Lakhnawati with valuable presents came to Delhi, who became recipient of excessive favours and endless affections.[4] Ghulam Husain says that the boundaries

1. Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Bakshi Nizamuddin Ahmad, p. 115.

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, p. 134.

3. Ibid, Text, Afif, p. 122.

4. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 597; Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 126.

between Delhi and Lakhnawati were also fixed at this time.[1] Such exchange of goodwill and present, as obtain only between two sovereigns, continued till the end of the reign of Ilyas Shah and leave no doubt that the king of Bengal was virtually recognised by the Delhi Sultan as an independent soviereign. The second embassy from Haji Ilyas, which visited the Sultan at Hisar Firozah with presents failed to please the Delhi king who says that "you should bring such picked elephants only as a king should present to a brother king."[2] And this friendly relations with the Delhi Sultan enabled Ilyas Shah to add one more laurel to his crown by leading a successful campaign against the Raja of Kamrup.

Ilyas Shah, who was holding a parallel royal court at the eastern part of the country, was an eye-sore to the Delhi historians, who stigmatised him as a "Bhangra".[3]

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, p. 98.

2. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 126.

3. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, Ghulam Husain Salim, pp. 93-95; Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol. II, p. 296. But modern research has rejected the contention. A.H. Dani has dwelt on the subject elaborately and has come to the conclusion that the word Bhangra or Bhang-eater was a corruption

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Meanwhile when presents were being regularly exchanged between the two sovereigns, Zafar Khan Farsi, a noble of Persian origin and son-in-law of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, the late ruler of Sonargaon, reached Hissar Firozah in the year 758 A.H. (1356-57 A.D.) along with his followers.[1] He presented an elephant to the king of Delhi and narrated the woeful tale of his sufferings, and solicited the Sultan's protection and help in the restoration of his authority in Sonargaon. Zafar Khan received thirty thousand tankas for a new suit of clothes, and his title Zafar Khan was confirmed. He was appointed Naib Wazir and a sum of four lac tankas was granted as allowance for his maintenance. After the end of 759 A.H. (1357-58 A.D.) Haji Ilyas sent his envoy Malik Tajuddin Betah along with magnificent presents to the court of Delhi. Sultan Firoz Shah received the envoy and the presents heartily, and reciprocated his goodwill by sending Malik Saifuddin, the Shahna-i-Pheel along with Turkish and Arabic horses, Khurasani fruits and other articles to the court of Bengal.

of the word Bangala and "it is hardly likely that the Sultan should have adopted such a title like Bhangra". (vide Jadunath Sarkar Commemoration Volume II, 1958, p. 153).

1. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Yahya, p. 126.

But by the time the Delhi envoys reached Bihar, Ilyas Shah had died, and his eldest son Sikandar had succeeded him. They waited at Bihar, and conveyed the news of the death of Ilyas Shah to Sultan Firoz and sought fresh instructions. The Sultan ordered that the presents be returned to Delhi, the horses be handed over to the army at Bihar, and Tajuddin Betah and other envoys of Bengal be sent to Kara.[1]

Sikandar Shah, the son of Haji Ilyas Shah, ruled over Bengal for more than three decades and succeeded in maintaining the independence of the kingdom against the aggression of Delhi. The most memorable event of his reign was the second invasion of Firoz Shah over his kingdom.

Afif[2] has tried to make us believe that the second invasion of Firoz Shah over Bengal was planned in the life time of Haji Ilyas to vindicate the claims of Zafar Khan Farsi and free the people of Sonargaon from Ilyas's tyranny. The truth, however, seems that so long as Haji Ilyas was alive Firoz Shah did not dare or contemplate a

1. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p.127; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, Ghulam Hussain Salim, p. 99.

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 142-43.

second attack on Bengal, because of sad experience of the failure of the first expedition was fresh in his memory. Zafar Khan Farsi had reached Delhi in 758 A.H. (1356-57 A.D.). Had Firoz Shah a contemplation to vindicate the claims of Zafar Khan, the second invasion of Bengal must have taken place in that or the next year. The fact remains that even after the arrival of Zafar Khan at Delhi, the Delhi Sultan had exchanged presents with Haji Ilyas, which shows that he had no desire at least at that time to measure his swords with Haji Ilyas. The death of Haji Ilyas Shah and the accession of young Sikandar as also the prospect of help which could be rendered by Zafar Khan, a member of the old ruling family of Sonargaon, encouraged Sultan Firoz Shah to recover Bengal. The vindication of Zafar Khan's claim was merely a pretext — a transparently frivolous pretext[1] — to annex Bengal. Firoz Shah repudiated the treaty concluded with Ilyas Shah, charged Sikandar with disloyalty on the ground that he had violated the treaty concluded by his father. He declared Zafar Khan as the legitimate ruler of Bengal, and once more decided to lead an expedition. But Sikandar Shah was absolutely unware of this attitude and motive of Sultan Firoz. After his accession Sikandar sent an envoy named Alam Khan[2] to Delhi,

1. Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, p. 177.

2. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 128.

which was followed in a few months by five elephants[1] and other valuable presents with Sayyid Rasuldar,[2] envoy of the Delhi Sultan, who had escorted the Bengal envoy to Lakhnawati. In view of this the allegation of disloyalty advanced against the Bengali king is unjustified. Disregarding all these overtures and good intentions of the Bengali king, Firoz Shah and his chronicler[3] have accused Sikandar of disloyalty and charged him guilty of acting differently from his father. A farman was delivered to Alam Khan to the effect that Sikandar, the foolish and inexperienced had gone astray from path of integrity and uprightness. The Sultan had at first no intention to draw sword against the Bengal King but Sirhindi states that as the latter had failed in discharging the duties of obedience, His Majesty had no other way but to march against him.[4]

Firoz Shah started on the second invasion of Bengal in 760 A.H. (1358-59 A.D.)[5] leaving Khan-i-Jahan as

1. According to Riyaz-us-Salatin (p. 100) 50 elephants were sent.
2. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 128.
3. Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 49-51.
4. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 128.
5. Ibid., p. 127.

his deputy at Delhi, with a mighty army consisting eighty thousand cavalry, 470 elephants, numerous barrier breaking boats, a large body of infantry and 'Ghair Wajihi' troops. Besides such a huge fighting force the royal camp had two outer tents, two reception tents, two sleeping tents, two tents for cooking and domestic work, one hundred eighty standards, eighty four assloads of drums and trumpets, and camels, asses, and horses in large numbers. A large sum of money was distributed as advance among the 'ghair wajihi' troops.[1]

When the imperial army reached Pandua via Kanauj and Awadh, the Bengali king, Sikandar, following the strategy of his father, avoided any pitched battle, evacuated the city and took shelter in the island fortress of Ekdala with his full force. Firuz Shah reached Ekdala on 16th Jamadi ul Awwal, 761 A.H. (4 April, 1360 A.D.).[2] The imperialists besieged the island fortress by erecting 'katghars' and small 'balistas' and 'manjaniks'. During the siege there were light actions and skirmishes and arrows and darts were hurled at each other with no decisive result. Zafar Khan was present in the Delhi royal camp, but it had no impact on Bengali camp. Sikandar's cool and

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 144-45.
2. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p. 128.

unbending resolution, his skilful leadership, countless troops and military ability succeeded in keeping the imperialists on the defensive. But on one occasion, one of the principal bastions of the Ekdala fort crumbled down due to heavy weight of Bengal soldiers mounted on it and caused a breach in the fort. Hisam ul Mulk and other generals of the imperial army urged the Sultan to order an immediate assault through the breach and capture the fort. Firoz, however, did not agree and restrained his people, and the court historian Afif,[1] as usual, attributes this restaint on the part of the Sultan to a chivalrous consideration for the honour of worthy muslim women inside the fort. During the night Sikandar himself mounted the eastern roof of the fort and urged his men to work assiduously, which they did the whole night and succeeded in restoring the breach in the wall. Next morning fighting was resumed and five hundred Bengali soldiers were killed and five thousand injured.[2]

Afif[3] gives a minute account of how the negotiations were conducted and peace made. He informs that

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 149-52.
2. Insha-i-Mahru, MS, F., p. 217.
3. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 153-63.

Sultan Sikandar, the king of Bengal was reduced to great distress and difficulty on account of lack of provision and his counsellors urged him to sue for peace. He, therefore, deputed an intelligent and confidential envoy to wait upon Sultan Firoz with a message that the continuation of war meant considerable loss of Muslim lives on both sides and they should therefore agree to bridge up the quarrel. The Delhi Sultan accepted this offer of peace on the condition that Sonargaon be restored to Zafar Khan. He deputed Azam Humayun Haibat Khan, a Bengali officer under Firoz Shah, having two sons in the service of Sikandar, who was an accomplished conversationalist to finalise peace terms. Haibat Khan by his suavity and wisdom conducted the peace talk to a successful end. He is said to have so humoured and flattered Sikandar that the Bengali king gave expression to his regard for the Delhi Sultan in laudatory phrases. Sikandar agreed to hand over Sonargaon to Zafar Khan. Returning to the imperial camp, Haibat Khan reported the full account of the agreement to the Sultan. The Delhi king being satisfied expressed a desire to be at peace with Sikandar and look upon him as newphew. On the suggestion of Haibat Khan, the Delhi Sultan ratified the treaty of peace and friendship and sent Malik Qubul Toraband with a crown worth eighty thousand tankas and five hundred Turki and Arabi horses to the court of Sikandar.

Malik Qabul placed the crown upon Sikandar's head, expressing peace and friendship between two sovereign sultans. Sultan Sikandar in return sent thirty seven elephants[1] and other valuable presents expressing a desire that every year there should be similar exchanges of good wishes and friendly feelings between them. Firoz Shah was immensely satisfied and offered one elephant out of these forty to Malik Qabul. He then directed Zafar Khan to take charge of Sonargaon, offering his force to sustain him there. But Zafar Khan realising the absurdity of holding Sonargaon against Sikandar, politely declined and said that he and his family were so happy and secure under the government of Delhi that he had given up the desire for Sonargaon. Firoz Shah thereupon left Ekdala for Delhi on 20th Jamadi ul Awwal, 761 A.H. (8 April, 1360 A.D.).[2] Thus Firoz Shah's second attempt to subjugate Bengal ended within four days and a farman about the happenings was sent to Delhi which was received by Khan-i-Jahan on 4th Rajab 761 A.H. (21 May, 1360 A.D.).[3]

1. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p.128; Muntakhab ut Tawarikh, Text, Badayuni, Vol.I, p.247 and Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Nizamuddin Ahmed, p.116 support Yahya; Firishta, Tarikh-i-Firishta, Vol.I, p.147 says forty eight elephants whereas Riyaz-us-Salatin, Ghulam Hussain Salim, p.101, mentions forty elephants.

2. Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, Text, Yahya, p.128.

3. Insha-i-Mahru, MS, F, 217.

The second invasion of Bengal by Sultan Firoz Shah, was a greater failure than the first as it could not achieve its primary object, viz., the subjugation of Bengal, for which the Delhi Sultan had undertaken the expedition. Even the much publicised scheme of restoring ZafarKhan upon Sonargaon fell through. The refusal of Zafar Khan to occupy Sonargaon in the dangerous proximity of Sultan Sikandar, in spite of Firoz Shah's support, proves that the strength and power of the Bengal king did not get a serious set-back. The panegyrist historians[1] of Firoz Shah's court have attempted in vain to gloss over the failure of their patron by dwelling at length upon how Sikandar was reduced to extremities, sought forgiveness and sent envoys to the royal court. Much of this is exaggeration, as the siege lasted only for four days. Even a perusal of the account of negotiations as narrated by Afif[2] gives a clear impression that Firoz Shah was as eager for peace as Sikandar, although there is no definite evidence to say that "it was the imperial side that sought peace and not the Bengal Sultan,[3] or that "Sultan Firoztook the

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text,Afif, pp. 152-54; Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, pp. 53-54.

2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 154-61.

3. Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal, N.K. Bhattasali, p. 49.

initiative in opening overtures of peace."[1] The fact that Azam Humayun Haibat Khan -- who hailed from Bengal and whose two sons were in the service of Sikandar was deputed to finalise the peace terms -- leads one to conclude that Firoz Shah was very anxious to close the Bengal campaign at any cost even if it meant slightly favourable terms to Sikandar. The present of a crown costing eighty thousand tankas by Firoz to Sikandar signifies the formal recognition of Sultan Sikandar as an independent ruler of Bengal. Thus ended ignominously the last attempt to reassert Delhi's suzerainty and incorporate Bengal in the Delhi Sultanate. With this failure for nearly two centuries until the rise of the Afghans Bengal was left in peace without any aggression from Delhi.

The long and peaceful reign of thirty five years of Sultan Sikandar Shah is evidenced by the architectural monuments of his age, such as the mosque at Adina. But the last years of Sikandar's life were not happy and he was killed in a battle by his rebel son, Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah near Pandua.[2]

1. The History and culture of the Indian people, the Delhi Sultanate, Vol. VI, p. 202.

2. Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, Ghulam Husain Salim, pp.106-08.

CHAPTER - V

BENGAL'S RELATIONS WITH THE SAIYID AND LODI RULERS OF DELHI

During the period of about two centuries after the sad end of Sultan Sikandar and till the rise of the illustrious Bengal king Alauddin Hussain Shah, Delhi did not try to assert its suzerainty over Bengal. Bengal kings also, on the other hand, did not think it necessary to maintain any relations with the Delhi rulers. Bengal's existence as an independent kingdom continued throughout the period undisturbed and its rulers did not receive any letters patent, title or robe of honour from the Delhi Sultans. Coins were minted in their own mints and issued in their own names. No exchange of presents or letters of courtesy is mentioned during the period.

The last part of Firoz Shah's reign was marked by the prevalence of chaos and anarchy. The sons and grandsons of the Sultan were quarreling among themselves for the succession and the nobles were looking to their own interest or striving to secure the person of the Sultan. Timur's invasion and its sack of Delhi shattered its supperstructure. And the history of the Saiyid rulers tells the same sad tale which reached its climax during the reign of Sultan Alauddin

Alam Shah and hence Delhi rulers got no opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Bengal.

It is reported that during the rule of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, one of the most popular Sultans of Bengal, a friendly relations with Khaja Jahan, the ruler of Jaunpur was established. There was also a very friendly exchange of envoys[1] between the Bengal king and the contemporary ruler of China. But this glorious period of Bengal came to an end with the tragic death of Sultan Ghiyasuddin.

After the death of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah three weak successors, namely, Saifuddin Hamza Shah, who ruled for one year 813 A.H.-814 A.H. (1410-1412 A.D.) with the title of "Sultan us Salatin",[2] his adopted son, Shihabuddin Bayazid, who ruled between 815-817 A.H. (1412-1414 A.D.) and Alauddin Firoz Shah, son of Shihabuddin —

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.118; Political Relations between Bengal and China in the Pathan Period, P.C. Bagchi, Vide, Visva-Bharati Annals, Vol.I, 1945, pp. 96-134.

2. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.119; Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol.II, p. 297.

were raised to the throne of Bengal one after another. But they were puppets in the hands of their nobles and one such noble was Raja Ganesh[1] of Dinajpur who seized the throne in 817 A.H. (1414-1415 A.D.). The Delhi authorities were not concerned with the revival of Hindu power in Bengal. But this restoration of Hindu authority created a stir among the 'Ulama', and saints, including Shaikh Nur Qath-i-Alam, who appealed to Sultan Ibrahim of Jaunpur and sought his intervention to overthrow Ganesh. The Sultan of Jaunpur marched into Bengal and an agreement was concluded between the Sultan of Jaunpur and Ganesh. After the peace, the family of Ganesh, subsequently Islamised, ruled over Bengal for three generations. Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah, the grandson of Raja Ganesh was assassinated by his slaves Shadi Khan and Nasir Khan. But immediately after this assassination dissension broke out among the assasins themselves and as a result Nasir Mahmud,[2] a decendant of Haji Shamsuddin

1. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, pp. 119-29.

2. Tarikh-i-Firishta, Text, Vol.II, p. 579; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, pp. 117-18; History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, pp. 130-32.

Ilyas was raised to the throne of Bengal. Mahmud assumed the title of Nasiruddin Abul Muzaffar Mahmud and ruled over Bengal peacefully for a period of sixteen years between 846 and 862 A.H. (1442-1458 A.D.) . Neither the Lodi kings of Delhi nor the Jaunpur sultans disturbed his kingdom. Rather these two powers engaged themselves in a fateful conflict to establish one's supremacy over the other. Hence it was not possible for them to turn their attention towards Bengal.

The restored Ilyas Shahi dynasty could not rule over Bengal more than forty six years, and in 892 A.H. (1486 A.D.) the last ruler of this dynasty, Sultan Jalaluddin Fath Shah was murdered by one of his Abyssinian slave.[1] The Abyssinians ruled for seven years in Bengal and the last Abyssinian ruler, Shamsuddin Muzaffar Shah was overthrown and killed by his rebel people under the able leadership of his Wazir, Saiyyid Hussain.

With the rise of Saiyyid Husain on the throne of Bengal, who assumed the title "Khalifatullah."[2] Alauddin Husain Shah, a brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal began. During the long, efficient and liberal rule of

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, pp. 138-41.

2. Ibid., p. 143.

Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah, the "creative genius of the Bengali people reached to Zenith" and "Vernacular found its due recognition as the literary medium" of Bengal. Due to the internal peace and security of his kingdom trade and commerce expanded, which led to the prosperity of the land. But while the work of internal consolidation was still in progress political developments compelled him to turn his attention westward.

Sharqi-Lodi struggle,[1] which began with the rise of Bahlul Lodi[2] on the throne of Delhi, reached a climax when Sikandar Lodi came to power. Jaunpur was a buffer kingdom

1. The struggle began on the issue of the throne of Delhi. The Sharqi Sultans regarded Bahlul Lodi as a userper and advanced their claim to the throne of Delhi. (Waqi, at-i Mushtaqi, Rizqullah Mushtaqi, MS. f. 5a) Moreover the Sharqi Sultans were also related to Saiyid rulers by matrimonial ties. (Tarikh-i-Khan-i Jahani, Niamutullah, p.124.)

2. Bahulul was the nephew of Malik Shah Bahram Lodi, alias Majlis-i-ali Islam Khan Lodi, who was assigned the iqta of Sirhind by Khizr Khan Saiyid. Before his accession, Bahlul invaded Delhi twice unsuccessfully, but in fine, Hamid Khan in collaboration with Husam Khan decided to invite Bahlul from Sirhind (Waqi at-i-Mushtaqi, Rizqullah Mushtaqi, MS. f.4a). Sultan Ala al-din Shah Saiyid abdicted in favour of Bahlul Lodi (Ibid. f. 5a).

between Delhi and Bengal. Hence the eclipse of the power of the Sharqi rulers at Jaunpur after the battle of Narila,[1] by the Lodi ruler of Delhi endangered the Western frontiers of the kingdom of Bengal.

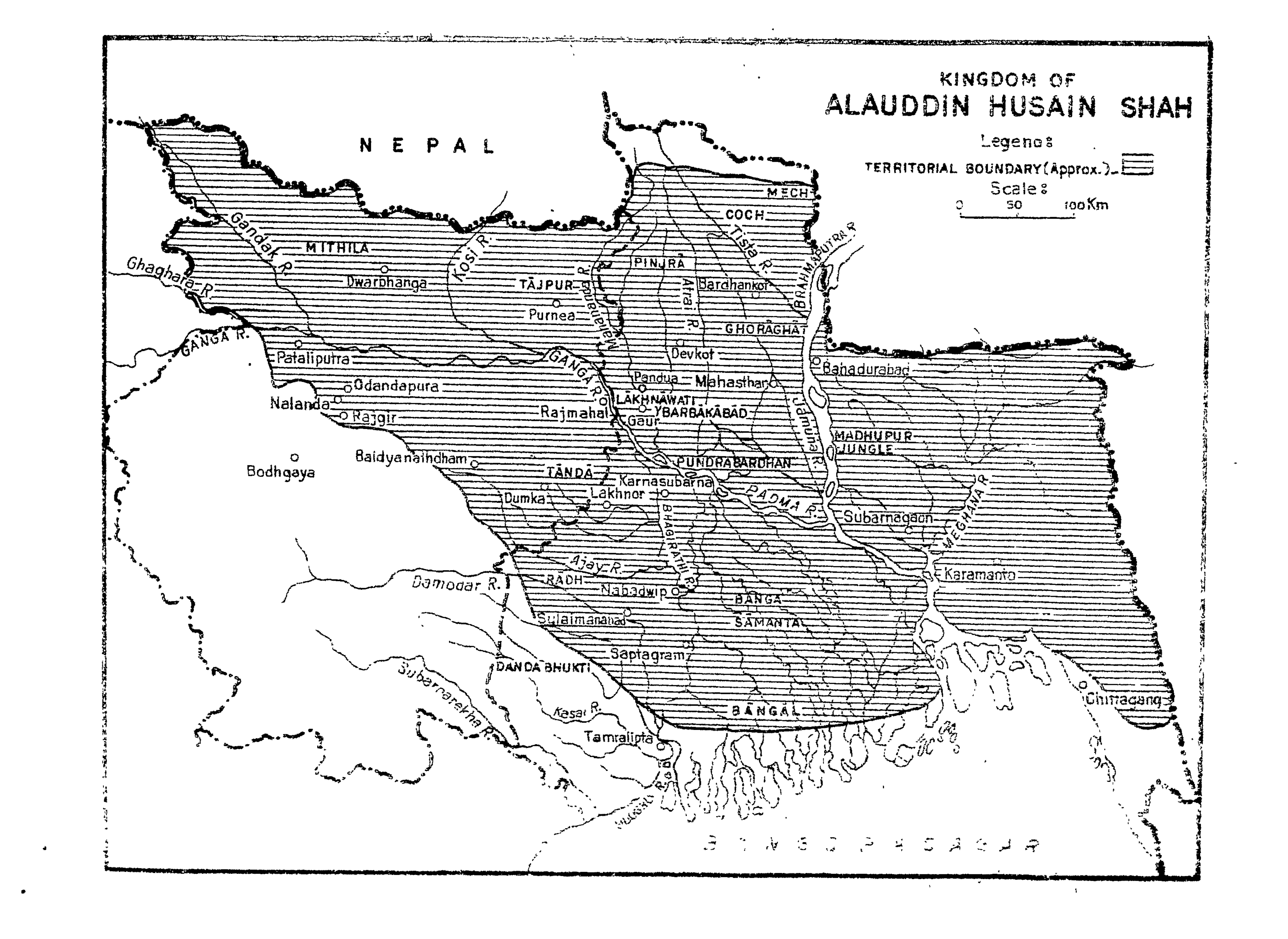
The Rajput landlords of the Eastern territories, who were deeply attached to the Sharqi Sultan of Jaunpur, wanted to serve the cause of Sultan Husain Sharqi. On the instigation of Sultan Husain Sharqi, they rose in rebellion and fomented trouble everywhere. They gathered 100,000 'sawars' and invited Sultan Husain Sharqi, who was inBihar. Sultan Sikandar Lodi ordered his nobles to rush to Jaunpur and in a battle near Beneras[2] Husain was completely defeated and was driven-away from Bihar.[3] The Sharqi king was forced to take refuge in the kingdom of Bengal and Alauddin Husain Shah received him with all honour and provided means for his comfort at Kahlgaon.[4]

1. For the account of the battle -- First Afgham Empire In India, A.B. Pandey, pp. 64-67.

2. Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text. Vol.I, Nizamuddin, p. 319.

3. Waqiat-i-Mushtaqi, Rizqullah Mushtaqi, MS. f. 11B; Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Vol.I, Nizamuddin, p. 319.

4. Riyaz-u-s-Salatin, Text, p. 135.



KINGDOM OF
ALAUDDIN HUSAIN SHAH
Legend:
TERRITORIAL BOUNDARY (Approx.)
Scale:
0 50 100 Km
NEPAL
MECH
COCH
Tista R.
MITHILA
Gandak R.
Ghaghara R.
Kosi R.
PINJRA
Dwarbhanga
TAJPUR
Mahananda R.
Atrai R.
Bardhankot
BRAHMAPUTRA R.
Purnea
GHORAGHAT
GANGA R.
Devkot
Bahadurabad
Pataliputra
Pandua
Mahasthan
Odandapura
LAKHNAWATI
Jamuna R.
Nalanda
YBARBAKABAD
Rajgir
Rajmahal
Gaur
MADHUPUR
JUNGLE
Baidyanathdham
PUNDRABARDHAN
Bodhgaya
TANDA
Karnasubarna
Lakhnor
PADMA R.
Dumka
BHAGIRATHI R.
Subarnagaon
MEGHANA R.
Ajay R.
RADH
Karamanto
Damodar R.
Nabadwip
BANGA
Sulaimanabad
SAMANTA
Saptagram
DANDA BHUKTI
Subarnarekha R.
Chittagong
Kasai R.
BANGAL
Tamralipta

With the defeat of Husain Sharqi the Eastern frontier of the Delhi kingdom touched the Western frontier of Bengal, which constituted a serious threat to her sovereignty and security. Hence after a period of about two centuries Bengal was again called upon to face Delhi's hostility.

The treatment accorded by the Bengal king to the fugitive ruler of Jaunpur annoyed the Lodi king of Delhi, and he decided on taking an immediate action before an effective political offensive-defensive alliance between the king of Bengal and Jaunpur could mature. He moved from Darweshpur to Tughluqpur, on the Bengal frontier probably in 901 A.H. (1495 A.D) and prepared for an invasion. The aggressive designs of the Delhi Sultan brought the Bengal army into action and Alauddin Husain Shah despatched a strong army under his son Daniyal to check the movements of the Delhi army. Both the armies remained encamped facing each other at Barh, but no battle was, however, fought. The Lodi generals, Mahmud Lodi and Mubarak Lohani did not take any initiative to and ultimately on the instructions of Sultan Sikandar they opened negotiations for peace.[1] A non-aggression pact was signed according to which the territorial boundary between Bengal and Delhi was well

1. Tabqat-i-Akbari, Text, Vol.I, Nizamuddin, pp. 319-20; Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh, Text, Vol.I, Badayuni, p. 319.

demarcated and prince Daniyal, on behalf of his father, undertook not to give shelter to Sikandar Lodi's enemies. But this clause does not appear to have affected the continued residence of Husain Sharqi at Kahlgaon, where he died.

The pact thus assured Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah peace and security on his Western frontier and the Bengal king could not turn to the expansion of his kingdom towards other frontiers of Bengal. He successfully expanded the boundary of his kingdom which "comprised all the territories bounded by Saran and Bihar on North-west, Sylhet and Chittagong on the South-east, and Hajo on the north-east, Mandaran and the 24-Parganas on the South-west."[1] As a whole, it may be said that during the liberal and catholic reign of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah, Bengal enjoyed such a spell of peace, material prosperity, and all round progress in the cultural sphere of the society that "the name of Husain Shah, the good, is still remembered from the frontiers of Orissa to the Brahmaputra."[2]

1. History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, pp. 150-51.

2. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Blochmann, 1873, p. 291.

After the death of Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah, his eldest son Nusrat with the title Nasiruddin Abul Muzaffar Nusrat Shah ascended the throne. Within two years of Nusrat's accession, serious political changes began to take place in the Western frontiers of his kingdom, which were fraught with dangerous possibilities.

The Afghan nobles of the eastern sarkars and vilayets rose in rebellion against the Delhi Sultan Ibrahim Lodi under the instigation of Nasir Khan Lohani, the muqta of Ghazipur and Masnad-i-ali Maruf Farmuli of the sarkar Kanauj and elected Dariya Khan Lohani, the muqta of Bihar as their chief.[1] Dariya Khan Lohani soon saw himself as the independent master of the whole country east of the Ganges, besides his own province, which had shaken the throne of Delhi. The rebels, after the death of Dariya Khan, elected his son Bahadur Khan Lohani as their king and proclaimed him under the name of Sultan Mahammad. Sultan Ibrahim sent an army, under Mian Mustafa Farmuli, successor and son-in-law of Muhammad Khan Farmuli, the muqta of Awadh, to reduce the rebels to obedience.[2] Thus

1. Waqi at-i Mushtaqi, Rizqullah Mushtaqi, MS. ff. 43 a-b; Babaranama, Vol. II, p. 527.

2. Babarnāma, Vol.II, p. 335; Tarikh-i-Firishta, ed. by Briggs, Vol. I, p. 597.

a civil war amongst the Afghans began on the Western frontier of the kingdom of Bengal.

Under such circumstances, the Bengal king Nusrat Shah pursued a policy of aggression and annexed the whole of Tirhut over which he placed his brothers-in-law, Alauddin and Makhdum-i-Alam.[1] The latter established himself at Hajipur, situated on the Gandak-Ganges confluence, and from this strategic base it was possible for him to keep eyes on all the river entrances into Bihar. He also widened his control over the riverain tract on both sides of Ghogra, as far as Azamgarh. He also took the possession of the fort and the district of Monghyr, which he entrusted to Qutb Khan, one of his best generals. Nusrat Shah also followed a policy of friendship towards the rebel Afghans of the Eastern sarkars and vilayats, which was a buffer area between the kingdoms of Delhi and Bengal. But with the repeated invasions of Babar and the rebellion of Daulat Khan Lodi in the Western part of the Lodi empire of Delhi created a new situation in the country.

In the battle of Panipat Sultan Ibrahim Lodi was defeated and the Afghans were overthrown from Delhi by the

1. Riyaz-us-Salatin - Text, p. 136.

Mughuls under Babar. The Mughal conquest of Delhi and Agra and the dislodgment of the Afghans in the Doab region, presented to the Bengal Sultan Nusrat Shah a problem of defending his own kingdom. Meanwhile, in the east, the confederate Afghan chiefs, who acknowledged Bahadur Khan Lohani as Sultan after recovering the country beyond the Ganges and occupying Kanauj, had made two or three marches into the Doab under Nasir Khan Lohani and Maruf Farmuli. Probably Nusrat Shah assisted the Afghans in their struggle against the Mughuls. But what active help he gave to the Afghans is not possible to determine, because the only contemporary authority Babar's memoirs for the relevant portion is lost. Babar held a grand council which recommended to send his son, Humayun, at the head of an army, to meet the challenge of the advancing Afghan army of the eastern confederates. Accordingly Humayun marched against the Afghans, who seem to have marched down the Doab to Jajmou and recrossed the Ganges. The Mughal army without any resistence occupied the lands which the Afghans had left. The Mughal Prince, after putting to flight the Afghan army, crossed the Ganges and took possession of Jaunpur. He next advanced towards Ghazipur, but the Afghans, on his approach, retired behind the Ghogra, probably into the territory of Bengal. Afghans were most cordially received at the court of Bengal and suitable

pensions were assigned to them according to their former rank and situation.[1] Tarafdar writes, "It seems, Nusrat was actuated by humanitarian considerations".[2] Babar, on the other side, had despatched an envoy to Bengal to ascertain the real intention of the Bengal king. But Nusrat Shah, being enough prudent and cautious, evaded any categorical answer and tried to take care to disarm Mughal hostility. Babar was not sure of Nusrat's real attitude even towards the end of 1528, for he said "that explicit representation should be made as to whether the Bengalis were friendly and single-minded; that, if nothing needed my presence in those parts, I should not make stay, but should move elsewhere at once."[3] Nusrat however professed neutrality by sending an envoy to Babar with rich and costly presents and hence Babar decided that "to go to Bengal would be improper."[4] Babar attached great importance to Nusrat's neutrality, for he seems to have realised that an active coalition between Nusrat and the

1. Tabqat-i-Akbari, Vol. III, Text, Nizamuddin, p.271; Riyaz-us-Salatin, Text, Ghulam Hussain Salim, p. 137.

2. Husain Shahi Bengal, M.S. Tarafdar, p. 69.

3. Babar Nama, Vol. III, p. 628.

4. Babar Nama, Vol. III, pp. 544, 628, 637.

Afghan chiefs would completely frustrate his political design in the East.

Sometime after this, Bahadur Khan Lohani, who took the title of Mahammad died and his minor son Jalal Khan Lohani succeeded him. The death of Bahadur deprived the Afghan confederacy a strong supporter and the victorious march of Babar across the Ganges to Buxer now shattered the unity of the Afghans. Sher Khan took a Jagir in South Behar from Babur. Meanwhile, Mahmud Lodi, the brother of the late Sultan Ibrahim Lodi declared himself as the heir of the late Sultan, and a large number of the Afghans now united to support his claims on Delhi. He seized Jaunpur and occupied the territories of the boy king Jalal Khan Lohani, who, had been forced to seek refuge with Nusrat Shah, the king of Bengal. Very soon a coalition was formed and Sher Khan now joined the cause of Mahmud Lodi and two Afghan armies proceeded along the two banks of the Ganges to Chunar and to Beneras to challenge Babar, while Biban and Sheikh Bayazid, the Afghan Farmuli chiefs moved towards north across the Ghogra to Gorokhpur.[1] The Mughal king being apprised of the real state of affairs, continued his march down the banks of the Ganges. He was informed that

1. Babar Nama, Vol. III, p. 652.

Sultan Mahmud Lodi having received the information about the movements of Babar had raised the seige and retreated in confusion. Sher Khan also followed suit and abandoned Beneras.[1] Babar proceeded by Chunar, Beneras, and Ghazipur and marched forward to take an offensive against Muhamud Lodi, who had now taken position behind the river Son. Mahmud Khan Lohani and Jalal Khan Lohani, whom, Babar writes, "the Bengali held as if eye-bewitched",[2] fled from Hajipur. Jalal and his followers tendered their submission to Babar at his camp at Buxer. Sher Khan and other Afghans of influence also tendered their unconditional submission to Babar, which amounted to a breaking up of the Afghan confederacy, leaving only Sultan Mahmud Lodi, who was afforded a refuge in Bengal, and his adherents to be combated. It is said that Sultan Nusrat married a daughter of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, who came to Bengal with the fugitive Mahmud Lodi.[3] Hence the grand alliance having failed Nusrat built up a new force comprising the army of Mahmud Lodi, the followers of Biban and Sk. Bayazid and the army under his Governor Makhdum-i-Alam.

1. Babar Nama, Vol. III, p. 405.
2. Ibid., p. 664.
3. History of Bengal, Stewart, pp. 113-16.

Babar marched forward to cross the Karmanasa and encamped beyond Chousa and Buxer. The Bengal army, meanwhile, crossed the Ganges, probably in the intention of co-operating with the fugitive Afghan King, Mahamud Lodi. Babar occupied Bihar and invested it on his son-in-law Muhammad Zaman Mirza.[1]

Babar was, so long, at peace with Bengal; but the shelter afforded to his flying Afghan enemy, Mahmud Lodi made the situation critical. Moreover, the Bengal army, at that time, was encamped near the junction of the Ganges and Ghogra, so as to be able to defend both the course of Ghogra, and the left bank of the ganges. Babar also discovered that the Bengali generals had collected about a hundred or a hundred and fifty vessels on their side of the river, by which they would be able to obstruct the passage of the Mughuls while facilitating their own. This situation made it indispensable that Nusrat should make a categorical declaration as to the disposition and intention of the Bengal Government. Babar therefore despatched an envoy named Mulla Mazhab from the frontier of Bengal, where Ghogra joins the ganges from the North-east, to the court of Bengal along with Nusrat's ambassador, Ismail Mitha, who was in the Mughal camp for more than a year, to remind the Bengal king that he had always carefully cultivated his

1. Babar Nama, Vol. III, pp. 406-10.

friendship and preserved the relations of peace and amity that subsisted between them; but that these relations, at the present context, could be preserved only by his acceding to three conditions.[1] Babar categorically demanded that until he received Nusrat's answer, he would follow the Afghan fugitives wherever they went. The Mughal king also decided to take care so that the people of Bengal should suffer no injury from his army, but the Bengal army must leave the passage across the Ghogra and retire from its present position so that the Mughal army could march without any hindrance; and that if passage was not left open for the advance of his army, Babar should not be made answerable for the consequences.

Sultan Junaid from Jaunpur with about twenty thousand men now joined Babar. Still Babar waited for nearly a month, but inspite of repeated requests the Bengal king would neither agree to the terms, nor reject them out right. Having received no satisfactory reply from Nusrat Shah, Babar decided to measure his sword with the Bengal army and thereby to compel them to quit their position beyond the Ghogra.

1. Babar Nama, Vol.III, pp. 411-12. Conditions are not specifically mentioned in the text.

Babar was informed about the prowess of the Bengal army and about its skill in the use of cannon. So he formed his army into six divisions and the whole army was put in motion. The Bengal forces — infantry and cavalry supported by navy, behaved bravely and fought for three days to maintain their control over Ghogra. They gave an effective account in the battle field but finally defeated,[1] on 27th Shaban (May 6) due to the defection of Shah Muhammad Maaruf, an Afghan nobleman of the highest rank. During the war, due to the Lodi-Lohani feuds and superior tactics of the Mughals, Babar with his army crossed into Saran and here he met Jalal Khan Lohani,[2] who was now appointed as a tributory vassal in Bihar. The defeat of Bengal-Afghan coalition army, however, did not affect the political suzerainty of Bengal and Nusrat Shah got the time and opportunity to re-arrange his political strategy to maintain Bengal's independence and peace with the Mughals.

The success of the Mughal arms, however, hastened the acceptance of the three terms of Babar, which had been earlier sent to Nusrat Shah for his compliance or refusal.[3]

1. Babar Nama, Vol. III, pp. 412-17.
2. Ibid., pp. 663-64, 659, 676.
3. Ibid., pp. 661, 665, 676.

A few days after the cease-fire, the Mughal envoy returned and brought a letter from the Lashkar -- Wazir Husain Khan and Shahzad of Monghyr, who on behalf of Nusrat Shah signed the terms of agreement. Babar also ratified the terms of pacification. He writes in his Memoir, "As this expedition had been undertaken for the purpose of punishing the rebellious Afghans, of whom many had gone off and disappeared, many had come in and entered my service, while the few that remained had taken shelter among the Bengalis, who undertook to answer for their conduct; and as, besides, the rainy season was now close at hand, I wrote an answer in return, and sent my ratification of the terms of pacification."[1] Thus the Mughal-Bengal conflict came to an end temporarily and peace was established.

Nusrat was conscious about the fact that no authority in Delhi would tolerate a parallel authority over Eastern India for a long period. But he was relieved of his anxiety due to the death of Babar. Humayun succeeded him and with his succession, situation had again taken a critical turn.

Mahmud Lodi supported by Biban and Bayazid was only waiting for a fit opportunity to return and re-occupy the

1. Babar Nama, Vol. III, p. 418.

kingdom from which the Afghans had been expelled. Nusrat Shah was also probably supporting the calls of the Afghans for the safety of his own kingdom. Sher Khan was also looking upon the Mughals with great contempt.[1] In fact, Mahmud Lodi with the assistance of Biban and Bayazid had raised the standard of opposition, and had taken possession of Jaunpur and its dependencies. Humayun had to move out from his capital to measure his sword with the discomfited Afghans. Biban and Bayazid were killed in the battle field and Sher Khan again accepted the Mughal vassalage for Chunar. Thus another attempt to revive the Afghan confederacy was shattered. But Nursat Shah still did not accept the suzerainty of the Mughals. Meanwhile it was rumoured that

1. "If fortune favours me, I can drive these Mughals back out of Hindusthan; they are not our superiors in war, but we let slip the power that we had by reason of our dissensions. Since I have been among the Mughals, I have observed their conduct and found them lacking in order and discipline; while those who profess to lead them, in the pride of birth and rank, neglect the duty of supervision, and leave everything to officials whom they blindly trust. These subordinates act corruptly in every case ... they are led by lust of gain, and make no distinction between soldier and civilian, foe or friend." (Vide, The Turks of India, H.G. Keene, p.95)

Humayun had been planning another expedition against Bengal. Nusrat Shah, naturally, attempted to find out another strong ally against the impending probable Mughal offensive. He sent an envoy, named Malik Marjan to the court of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat with a proposal for friendship and alliance. Bahadur Shah was also eager to stir up troubles in the eastern India to fulfil his own life's mission.[1] But the plan could not be matured as Nusrat Shah died meanwhile. And thus the last diplomatic move of the Bengal king was frustrated.

Sultan Nusrat Shah was succeeded by his son, Alauddin Firuz Shah, who ruled less than a year and was murdered by his uncle Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah. Having failed to take a correct apprisal of the situation Mahmud involved himself in a long-drawn war with Sher Khan of Bihar, who was not loyal at heart to the Mughals. This war forced him to throw himself in the arms of the Lohanis and thus the Bengal's ties with the Eastern confederacy broken and the unity in the ranks of the Afghans was

1. "He earnestly wished for some political troubles to entangle the emperor in the Eastern provinces so that his attention and energy might be diverted to that quarter, and Bahadur might thus be given a free hand to deal with the Rajputs (Vide, Sher Shah, K.R. Quanungo, p. 109).

shattered. Sher Khan tried to dissuade the Bengal king from these movements. But he failed and consequently Sher Khan invaded Bengal. Mahmud was defeated and wounded, and the city of Gaur was captured.[1] Thus the political independence of Bengal came to an end after two hundred years' due to lack of imagination and incompetence of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah of the great Husain Shahi dynasty of Bengal.

1. Tarikh-i-Shahi, Ahmad Yadgar, p. 183.

CHAPTER - VI

C O N C L U S I O N

Political aspirations of Bengal took its origin long ago, since the beginning of the history of the land. From time immemorial, the people of Bengal were conscious and proud of their distinct entity in the body politic of the sub-continent. This consciousness was based upon certain peculiar characteristics. Firstly, the main bulk of the people of Bengal formed a homogeneous ethnic group. The geographical contiguity, which was not fully realised in ancient Bengal, also played a role in shaping the history of the land. The linguistic affinity is another factor which also helped in the growth of regional consciousness in Bengal, though the vernacular literature was then in its infancy and in fluid state. The economic self-sufficiency of the region and an well-knit social system helped in the process of achieving a political unity and a distinct national life amongst the inhabitants of the land. This consciousness of the people of Bengal encouraged them to maintain the sanctity and independence of the land against the onslaught of the invaders from other parts of India.

Since the days of the Ramayana, the story of the heroic struggles of the people of Bengal is heard of.

Kalidasa, who was very faithful to the great epic Ramayana, mentions about the valiant fight of the people of Suhma and Vanga against the triumphant march of the epic hero Raghu. The people of Suhma were 'unyielding' but the powers of the great hero forced them to surrender before a massive army of Raghu. The people of Vanga tried to resist the forces of the epic hero with the might of their naval force, but they were "displaced and then replaced" by the victorious king. And in return the people of Vanga "approached Raghu and honoured him with the hoards."[1] The people of Vanga were thus turned into a tributory race under the king Raghu and those of Suhma were included within his kingdom. This was the first struggle of the people of Bengal who fought to maintain the sovereignty and independence of the land against an invador from uppêr India. The Ramayana includes Vanga as an integral part of the empire of Dasaratha.[2] The Mahabharata refers to Bengal as divided into a number of states, of which nine are specially mentioned. The great epic describes that Karna defeated the Suhmas, the Pundras and the Vangas and included Vanga and Anga into one Vishaya within his kingdom. Bhimasena succeeded in subdueing all the local princes of Bengal. Vasudeva, the

1. Raghuvamsam, Kalidasa, Canto IV, SL. 34 to 37.
2. Ramayana, Ayodhya-Kanda, X. 37.

king of the Pundras had to suffer humiliation at the hands of the Pandu Raja. But when the internecine strife started between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, Vasudeva took the opportunity and raised the standard of independence. He created a strong and powerful kingdom uniting Vanga, Paundra and Kirata to wreak vengeance on the Pandus.. This is the first occasion when one prince of a part of Bengal tried to forge an unity amongst the inhabitants of the land to meet the challenge of the intruders. Vasudeva then allied himself with Duryodhana and took the battle-field against the Pandavas. He also entered into an alliance with Jarasandha of Magadha. But unfortunately he was defeated by Krishna and had to pay tribute to the court of Yudhisthira.[1] Thus a tradition of challenge to the upper Indian princess was created by Vasudeva and the people of Bengal and this tradition was carried on by both the Hindus and the Muslim rulers in the succeeding ages.

In the next phase, it appears from the writings of the Greek and Latin writers that by the end of the 4th century B.C. Bengal emerged as the strongest sovereign political power in the eastern and northern India.

1. History of Ancient Bengal, R.C. Majumdar, p. 27.

Unfortunately, this political greatness of Bengal came to an end with the establishment of a powerful empire in northern India by Chandragupta Maurya. But there is no positive evidence by which one can conclude that Bengal was subjugated and annexed by the Mauryas. No inscription of Asoka has been found in any part of Bengal, though we find his records in other parts of his vast empire. We also do not have any positive information about Bengal during the period between fall of the Muryas and the rise of the Gupta empire, yet it can be said that Bengal had already created a distinct position in the then political and economic life of the sub-continent.

At the beginning of the 4th century A.D. we find several kingdoms like Samatata, Davaka and Pushkarana. There was no unity amongst the rulers of these kingdoms. It was a period of political uncertainty and chaos. But with the rise of the Imperial Guptas, the people of Bengal again came to its senses and tried to hoist the flag of independence. The inscription engraved on the iron pillar at Meherauli, near the Qutb Minar at Delhi proves that the rulers of Bengal tried to offer an united resistence to the Gupta ruler, Chandra, who succeeded in defeating them in a battle in Vanga. It proves again that the independent States of Bengal did combine and offered a mighty resistance to the invador to maintain their independence.

Vainyagupta, the ruler of Samatata was a semi-independent feudatory chief, who took the titles of 'Maharaja' and 'Dvadasaditya'. With the decline of the Gupta rule Vainyagupta took the title 'Maharajadhiraja', which proves that with the decline of the Imperial Guptas he openly declared himself as emperor. This is the beginning of an independent and sovereign kingdom in Bengal. Very soon, following the foot prints of Vainyagupta, two powerful kingdoms, namely Vanga and Gaur came into being.

After Vainyagupta, we find the names of three rulers Gopachandra, Dharmaditya and Samacharadeva, who also took the title of 'Maharajadhiraja', which proves that all of them were sovereign and independent rulers. But perhaps in the last quarter of the sixth century A.D. Bengal lost its independence when the Chalukya king Kiritivarman conquered it.

But very soon, in the early seventh century A.D. another independent kingdom in Bengal — Gour was established as a sovereign state under Sasanka. The later Guptas became weak due to their constant conflict with the Maukhari rulers, and the Kalachuris defeated Mahasenagupta disastrously. Moreover the invasion of the Tibetan king Srongbtsan weakened the kingdom of the later Guptas.

Sasanka took the advantage of this catastrophe and established an independent kingdom at Gaur with its capital at Karnasuvarna. Thus Gaur, which was for a long time under the Gupta rule became a sovereign independent state. Vasudeva, Vainyagupta and Sasanka — all were once semi-independent feudatory chiefs. But when they got the opportunity, declared independence and established sovereign rule in different parts of Bengal. Thus the tradition of independence got a firm footing. He also followed an imperial policy and established his supremacy over Magadha, Dandabhukti, Utkala and Kongoda, but it is not known whether his kingdom included Vanga or not. Sasanka also succeeded in maintaining the sovereignty of Gaur against the combined onslaught of Thaneswar and Kamrupa.

But with the death of Sasanka of Gaur and Samacharadeva of Vanga, an age of anarchy and confusion prevailed over the history of Bengal. There was no central political authority in the country and the local chiefs were after the establishment of their control over their respective territories. As a result Bengal had to face foreign invasions again and again and hence the independence of both the kingdom of Gaur and Vanga was shattered. The people of Bengal were not happy with the situation as "they were not accustomed to such act" and were eager to restore freedom, peace and progress in the country.

Hence they elected from among themselves, one, named Gopala as their king.

This election of Gopala as the king to put an end to lawless state of affairs means that local chiefs had to surrender their selfish interests to a national cause, to save the land from anarchy, confusion and invasions from outside. Vasudeva, Vainyagupta, Gopachandra, Dharmaditya, Samacharadeva and Sasanka had already created a tradition — a tradition of national consciousness and love for freedom, which again manifested when the independent local chiefs of Bengal elected one of them as their supreme central sovereign power to free the people from a period of darkness. Bengal was united under one political authority. Bengal's dream of founding an empire in northern India was materialised during the reign of the Pala rulers. But with the death of Devapala, the glory and brilliance of Bengal again began to decline. Internal disunity and disruption invited invasions again and again from other parts of India, which ultimately led to the collapse of the kingdom and establishment of the Sena dynasty in Bengal.

The Senas came from Karnataka region of Deccan and settled in Bengal. They disconnected their relations with their homeland, completely Bengalised themselves and introduced a social system in the region. During the reign

of Raja Lakshmanasena, Bengal again faced a danger from outside. Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, a Muslim adventurer invaded Bengal and succeeded in establishing his rule over a part of Bengal.

With the success of Bakhtiyar, the history of Medieval Bengal began. The political power that he built up in Bengal was theoretically and for all practical purposes independent and sovereign. The striking of coins and reading of Khutba in the name of Bakhtiyar is a sufficient evidence of a distinct political status for the first Muslim ruler of Bengal and the kingdom that he founded. Thus the success of Bakhtiyar Khalji strengthened the tradition of Bengal's aspirations for political independence.

The Turkish Lord of Delhi, Qutbuddin Aibak could do nothing to assert Delhi's suzerainty over Bengal till the Khaljis of Lakhnawati themselves became involved in some sort of a civil war for the throne. Delhi first intervened by ordering Qaimuz Rumi, the Governor of Awadh to march upon Bengal. This time a comrade of Bakhtiyar, Tajuddin Mahmmad Shiran Khalji was on the throne of Bengal, who tried to continue the same tradition of independence and sovereignty. But Ali Mardan Khalji, the assasin of Bakhtiyar, betrayed the cause and interest

of the land. He escaped to Delhi and persuaded Aibak to despatch the Governor of Awadh to Lakhnawati with instructions to assert Delhi's suzerainty over Bengal. As soon as Qaimaz Rumi crossed the river Kosi, Malik Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji, who was the fief-holder of Gangtori betrayed the cause of Khalji Bengal and joined the Turkish army of Delhi. The defection and treachery decided the fate of Bengal and Shiran Khalji evacuated Devkot, the capital. The Delhi army entered the capital unopposed. As a reward for his defection, Iwaz Khalji was assigned with the iqta of Devkot and henceforth the supremacy of the Turks of Delhi over the Khalji kingdom of Bengal was established for the first time at least in theory. Bengal was to be governed by a protege of the Turkish Sultan of Delhi. Shiran Khalji preferred to die as a sovereign rather than submit to the vassalage of Delhi.

Ali Mardan Khalji also got the reward from Delhi for his betrayal. Qutbuddin Aibek appointed him as the Viceroy of Bengal to strengthen Delhi's suzerainty over the province. But this viceroy after the death of Aibak declared independence and took the title Sultan Alauddin. This is a special feature of the Medieval history of Bengal. Delhi again and again tried to maintain their

hold over this part of the country by appointing their slaves as governors but these slave-viceroys whenever got the opportunity raised the standard of independence.

However, soon Ali Mardan's greed and cruelties provoked the Khaljis, who rose up in arms against him and the local people helped them[1] to dispose him from the throne. They murdered him and crowned Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji, who assumed the title of Sultan Ghiyasuddin and sanctified his status by procuring the investiture from the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad. In fact, Iwaz Khalji was the first Muslim ruler in India, who secured a formal recognition from the Caliphate.

But the Turkish rulers of Delhi again and again attempted to reduce the independent Bengal to subjection. The Sultans like Iltutmish and Balban made repeated attempts in that direction. They adopted the policy of appointing their slaves to the office of Viceroy to bring Bengal under permanent subjection. But this policy of the Turkish lords of Delhi was also frustrated as whoever was put on the 'takht' of Bengal soon revolted against Delhi under favourable circumstances.

1. Tabqat-i-Nasiri, Tr. Raverty, p. 580.

Of all these rebellions, Tughral's rebellion against the overlordship of Delhi shook the very foundation of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi. Ghiyasuddin Balban devised a new policy to keep Bengal under subjection by appointing his slave Tughral as the deputy to the Governor of Bengal. He did it to put a check on the ambition of the Governor of Bengal, "a class always prone to rebellion."

But this policy of the Turkish lord of Delhi also did not work well. Tughral soon drove out the Governor of the province, assumed the title of Sultan and issued coins in his own name. It was only after repeated failures of the imperial armies, that Balban himself had to march towards Bengal and succeeded in suppressing the fire of rebellion. The Turkish king of Delhi now adopted a new policy to maintain their suzerainty over the province. Instead of appointing a slave governor, Balban now appointed his son Bughra Khan as the Viceroy of Bengal. But this policy also did not succeed. After the death of Balban, his son also declared independence and hence Bengal became a nightmare to the rulers of Delhi.

With the rise of the Khaljis at Delhi the situation changed. They did not interfere in the affairs of Bengal

and hence Bengal enjoyed virtually independence during the period.

But with the accession of Ghazi Malik Tughluqq to the throne of Delhi, situation took a new turn. Ghazi Malik Tughluq alias Sultan Ghiyasuddin taking the uncertain political condition as an opportunity, invaded Bengal and conquered it. He divided the country into two administrative units to bring Bengal under permanent subjection. But his son, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq divided the province into three territorial units, each under a governor appointed by the Sultan. He also adopted an effective policy of checks and balances towards Bengal to maintain Delhi's paramountcy over the province. For some time this plan worked well but when the Sultan was busy in dealing with other rebellious regions Bengal again tried to raise its banner of independence, which in the long run led to the rise of an illustrious ruling family under Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah, who restored Bengal's independence, territorial unity of the province and defied successfully the authority of Delhi.

Sultan Firoz Shah of Delhi personally led two expeditions against Bengal, one in 1353 A.D. when Ilyas Shah frustrated the attempt of Delhi, and again in 1358 A.D. when Ilyas's son Sikandar Shah defended Bengal's

independence. It is to be noted that Firoz Shah's invasions were resisted tooth and nail not only by the Muslim subjects but also by the Hindus and Hindu generals. As a matter of fact, Firoz Shah was deeply impressed by the spirit of independence of the people of Bengal and he virtually acknowledged it. The Delhi Sultan virtually recognised Sultan Sikandar as a sovereign ruler of Bengal and thus ended ignominously the last attempt to incorporate Bengal in the Delhi Sultanate.

The tradition of Bengal's existence as an independent kingdom continued upto the period of Alauddin Husain Shah and his son Nusrat Shah. Saiyid Sultans of Delhi were too much busy with their own affairs and hence they did not interfere in the affairs of Bengal. But with rise of the Lodis, Bengal was again dragged in to the affairs of northern India due to Lodi-Sharqi conflict on the succession of the throne of Delhi. Sultan Alauddin very successfully tackled the problems and succeeded in maintaining the sovereignty of the independent kingdom of Bengal.

After the battle of Panipat in 1526, a new force — the Mughals under Babar came into existence. The Mughal-Afghan hostility dragged the Bengal king Nusrat

Shah to forefront in the eastern region. On his support and assistance an anti-Mughal front was organised and Babar decided to march against Bengal — an open confrontation took place. But ultimately a peace was made through which Babar recognised the sovereignty and independence of Bengal.

But Nusrat Shah's successor Ghiyasuddin Mahmud failed to make a correct apprisal of the situation and hence Sher Khan succeeded in establishing his control over Gaur. Very soon the fugitive Sultan Ghiyasuddin Mahmud died and with him political independence of Bengal also came to end.

The Delhi chronicler Barani writes that since the time when Muizuddin Sam conquered Delhi, every governor that had been sent from thence to Lakhnawati took advantage of the distance, and of the difficulties of the road, to rebel. If they did not rebel themselves others rebelled against them, killed them, and seized the country. The people of this country had for many long years evinced a disposition to revolt, and the disaffected and evil disposed among them generally succeeded in alienating the loyalty of the governors.[1] Shams

1. Tarik-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 82.

Siraj Afif has ascribed two principal causes for the failure of Delhi to subdue Bengal permanently. Firstly, Bengal was a land of undaunted fighting men and secondly, the nobles of the country passed their lives in their islands.[1] Moreover it is also said that the bravery of the Paiks mostly Hindus and landed militia of the province, who according to Barani, were perpetually bragging of their valour and had picked up the betel of self immolation,[2] made the task of conquering Bengal difficult for any outsider.

But perhaps these are not basic causes for the success of the Bengalis against the Delhi rulers. These are not the factors for which Bengal again and again hoisted the flag of independence. Perhaps the economic self-sufficiency of the province lured the Delhi rulers and their subordinate governors of different neighbouring provinces of Bengal to invade the region. This economic self-sufficiency, on the other side, encouraged the Bengal kings to maintain and hoist the flag of independence and sovereignty of the country. This economic prosperity of the land was not destroyed due to the

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Afif, pp. 111, 149.
2. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 98.

incessant invasions of the Delhi rulers and their subordinate governors is proved from the narratives of Ibn Battuta, who visited Bengal during the reign of Fakruddin. "The African Globe-trotter had passed through civilised and prosperous hubs of humanity in Africa and Asia, visited Cairo, Basrah, Shiraj, Isfahan and Pekin, travelled through Bukhara, Samarqand, Tirmiz, Balkh and Herat in Afghanistan, but nowhere else in the world he seen such low prices and such comfortable abundance of rice as he did in Bengal. And the prices of certain commodities jotted down by him would amply show how Bengal was a paradise of plenty in that age".[1] Ibn Battuta writes about Bengal that, "it is a gloomy place", and the people of Khurasan call it "A hell full of good things". The price-table of some of the commodities supplied by Ibn Battuta are given as follows

80 ratls Paddy	...	8 dirhams
25 ratls Rice	...	8 dirhams
1 milch cow	...	3 silver dinars
8 fat fowls	...	1 dirham
15 pigeons	...	1 dirham
1 fat ram	...	2 dirhams
1 ratl of sugar	...	4 dirhams
1 ratl of rose water	...	8 dirhams

1. History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, p.101.

1 ratl of ghee ... 4 dirhams
1 ratle sesame oil ... 2 dirhams
A fine cotton cloth, of excellent quality,
thirty cubits long 2 dirhams.[1]

It is difficult to calculate the said price table of different commodities in terms of modern value exchange, but it is evident from the statement of Ibn Battuta that prices are nowhere in the world lower than that of Bengal.

There is a number of interesting records[2] on the exchange of embassies between Bengal and China during the

1. Rehla, Text, Ibn Battuta, pp. 234-35.

2. (a) Ying Yai Sheng lan which was compiled by Ma Huan between 1425 and 1432 A.D. It was translated by Rockhill in T'oung Pao, 1915, pp. 436-40.

(b) Sing Ch' a Sheng lan, compiled by Fei-Sin in 1436 A.D. It is an account of Hou-hien's visit to Bengal in 1415. It was translated by Rockhill in T'oung Pao, 1915, pp. 440-44.

(c) Si Yang Ch ao Kung tien lu' compiled by Huang Sing ts'eng in 1520 A.D. A translation of this account was published in Journal Royal Asiatic Society, 1895, pp. 529-33 by G.Phillips.

contd .. P/244.

first half of the 15th century, wherefrom one can get an idea about the economic condition of Bengal of the time. From the Chinese records it is clear that ambassadors were sent from Bengal in 1405, 1408, 1409, 1412, 1414, 1420 and 1438-39. A Chinese mission for the first time visited Bengal soon after the Bengal mission of 1409. The second was sent probably in 1413 and the third in 1415.

P.C. Bagchi, on the basis of these Chinese records describes the economic condition of the then Bengal thus, "All accounts say that the soil was fertile and that it produced in abundance. The land used to yield usually two crops a year. There was no need of artificial irrigation and the crops grew by themselves in the proper season.

(d) Shu Yu Chou tsen lu compiled in 1574 by Yen Ts'ong-Kien.

(e) Ming-she, the official compilation was completed in 1739.

Moreover, there are a few other records of the commercial intercourse between China and Bengal of the Yuan and Ming Periods, namely — (a) Chu fan Che compiled by Chao Ju-Kua, and Tao Yi Che bo compiled by Wang Ta Yuan.

Both men and women were deligent in works of the field. In seasons other than the sewing seasons, the people were used to spinning and weaving. Among the agricultural products of Bengal the Chinese specially mention — rice which ripens twice a year, two kinds of millet, sesamum, beans, ginger, mustard, onions, garlic, cucumber, melons and brinjal. Among other native products the Chinese mention coral, pearls, crystals, cornelians, peacock feathers. The common fruits were banana, jack-fruit, sour pomegranate, and cocoanut, sugar-cane, sugar, honey, butter and ghee were also much in use.

The Chinese speak of the various industries of Bengal, paper, lacquar, sugar, cotton and silk. The most important industry was, however, the cotton industry and the Chinese accounts mention a number of cotton fabrics of Bengal, all of which, however cannot be identified —

(a) Pi-pu or Pi-po (b) Man - Che - ti,
(c) Sha - na - pa - fu, (d) Ki - pai, bi - ta - li,
(e) Sha - ta - eul, (f) Ma - hei - ma - bi.

Of other fabrics in use in Bengal the Chinese accounts mention, silk, embroidered silk handkerchiefs, brocaded taffetas, sa - ha - la, i.e., shawl.

The Chinese accounts tell us that the people had a big trade. The market place in the capital was full of different types of shops where all sorts of things were available. The Chinese trade with Bengal consisted of gold, silver, satins, silk, blue and white porcelin, copper, iron, vermillion, quick-silver and grass-mats.

The Chinese visitors describe the people of Bengal as very generous and courteous and say : "To conclude, Bengal is rich and civilised. To our ambassador they presented gold basins, gold girdles, gold flagons, and gold bowls and to our vice ambassador the same articles in silver. To our officials of the ministry of foreign affairs they presented golden bells and long gowns of white hemp and silk. Our soldiers got silver coins. If they had not been rich how could they do it in such an extravagant way."[1]

The Chinese records further refer to the absence of tea for which the people used to serve the guests with

1. Political relations between Bengal and China in the Pathan period, P.C. Bagchi, vide Visva-Bharati Annals, Vol. I, 1945, pp. 113-16.

betel-nuts. Wine produced from cocoanut, from the nut of a tree and 'Kajang' wine was also in use.

Ocean-going ships which carried goods to foreign countries were made in Bengal. And the country had a sea-port, at the mouth of the sea, called Ch'a-ti-Kiang,where certain duties were collected and the merchants from foreign countries come from outside and anchor there. In all large-scale transactions they used a silver coin which is called tangka, but they used sea-shells, called cowrie for small transactions. From the records of the Chinese officials it is clear that the kingdom of Bengal. in those days was rich and prosperous. In consequence of which, the population of the capital increased by leaps and bounds and the large market place of Lakhnawati[1] was hummed with traders and merchants from different parts of the country. On the other side, the Delhi rulers were also attracted to this economic prosperity of the land and attempted time and again to subjugate it.

1. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Text, Barani, p. 91.

APPENDIX - 'A'

Proclamation (Nishan)
of
Sultan Firoz Shah
at Pandua.*

"Whereas it has come to Our auspicious ear that Ilyas Hajji has been committing oppression and highhandedness upon the people of the territory of Lakhnawati and Tirhut, shedding unnecessary blood, even shedding the blood of women, although it is a well established proposition in every creed and doctrine that no women if she be a kafir, should be slain : And (whereas the said Ilyas Hajji) has been levying illegal cases not sanctioned by the law of Islam, and thus putting the people into trouble; there being no security of life and property, no safety for honour, and chastity : And whereas the territory was conquered by our Masters and has come down to us by inheritance, and also as a gift of Imam (Abbasid Khalifa of Egypt) it devolves upon our Royal and Courageous selves to safeguard the people of that State. And as Ilyas Hajji during the life time of his late Majesty was obedient, and loyal to the throne; and even during our

* This is found among Ain ul Mulk's correspondence Insha-i-Mahru, MS. F. 22-23, Vide, Journal Asiatic Society, Bengal, New Series, XIX, 1923, pp. 279-80.

auspicious Coronation, he conferred his submission and fealty, as becomes a subordinate, sending petitions and waiters to attend upon Us; so if, heretofore, it were brought to our august notice an infinitesimal part of the oppression and highhandedness that he had been committing on God's creatures, we might have admonished him, so that he might have been desisted therefrom : And whereas he has exceeded the limit, and publicly rebelled against Our authority, therefore we have approached with an invincible army for the purpose of opening this territory, and for the happiness of the people thereof; desiring thereby, to delivery all from his tyranny, to convert the wounds of his oppressions by the salves of Justice and mercy, and that the tree of their existence, withered by the hot pestilential wind of tyranny and oppression, might flourish and fructify by the limpid water of our bounty.

We have therefore by the exuberance of our mercy commanded that all the people of the territory of Lakhnawati — the Sadat, Ulama, Mashaykh, and others of similar nature; and also the Khans, Maliks, Umara, Sadrs, Akaber, and M'aarif including their train and suit, — those who may prove their sincerity or those whose zeal for Islam may prompt thereto, may resort to our world-protecting presence, without waiting and delay, we shall give them more than they received from their

fiefs, villages, lands, stipends, wages, and salaries; And the class of people, called Zamindars, as Muqaddams (?), . . . and such like, from the river Kasai (Cossye) to the farther limit of the Velayat of Lakhnauti, that may (similarly) come to our world-protecting presence, We shall remit wholly the produce and duties (revenue in cash and kind) for the current year; and from the next year, We have directed to levy the revenue and duties, in accordance with the Regulation promulgated during the reign of the late Sultan Shamsu'd Din but in no case more than that should be demanded, and the extra or illegal taxes or duties, which may weigh unduly heavily upon the people of that part of the country, should entirely be remitted and removed. And such of the hermits, Saihks, and gabys (? Zoroasterians), etc., who may come in a body to Our world-protecting presence, We shall allow them wholly what they used to receive from their fiefs; villages, lands, wages and stipends etc., and those who may come in their half number, (that is in two batches on different dates,) We shall allow them one belma (?) and anyone who may come singly, We shall allow him what he had before. Further more, We shall not remove them from their original places or give them cause for distress; that We have commanded that one and all of this tract may live and

dwell in their homes and hearths, according to his and their hearts' desire, and may enjoy even more contentment and freedom from anxieties. Insha' al-lah (aala (if God Almighty may wish)."

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